LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTION SYSTEMS

Appendix Volume: Individual City Reports

Special Project Report
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FOREWORD

The Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs has established interdisciplinary research on policy problems as the core of its educational program. A major part of this program is the nine-month policy research project, in the course of which two or three faculty members from different disciplines direct the research of ten to twenty graduate students of diverse backgrounds on a policy issue of concern to a government agency. This "client orientation" brings the students face to face with administrators, legislators, and other officials active in the policy process, and demonstrates that research in a policy environment demands special talents. It also illuminates the occasional difficulties of relating research findings to the world of political realities.

This appendix to the report on local government election systems was produced by a policy research project conducted at the LBJ School in academic year 1983-84 with funding from the City of Austin and the Texas Municipal League. It presents individual narratives on election system changes in eight major cities in the United States which have changed to some sort of district representation in the election of their city councils.

The curriculum of the LBJ School is intended not only to develop effective public servants but also to produce research that will enlighten and inform those already engaged in the policy process. The project that resulted in this report has helped to accomplish the first task; it is our hope and expectation that the report itself will contribute to the second.

Finally, it should be noted that neither the LBJ School nor The University of Texas at Austin necessarily endorses the views or findings of this study.

Max Sherman
Dean

PREFACE

This document is Volume Two of the final report of the LBJ School of Public Affairs Policy Research Project on Local Government Election Systems. The project, sponsored by the City of Austin and the Texas Municipal League, is an investigation of the effects on cities of changing from at-large local electoral systems to systems involving some form of district representation. Volume One reported the results and analysis of the study; this volume, Volume Two, contains individual city narratives which detail the experiences of eight municipalities with differing electoral systems and presents the interview schedule used to gather much of the information for Volume One.

Our interest in this project arises directly from the trend toward district representation in local government which began in the 1960s and has accelerated markedly since 1970. In Volume One we were interested in both the general effects accompanying a change from at-large to district representation and the specific effects such a change might have on the City of Austin. In addition, we were concerned with the trend toward district representation in small Texas cities. This dual interest reflects the sponsorship of the project.

The interviews, which form the basis of these narratives, were conducted in the fall of 1983 and thus reflect perceptions and facts as of that date. Finally, along with Volume One, this report is intended both to fulfill the needs of the Austin City Council and to satisfy the wider perspective of the Texas Municipal League.

CHAPTER ONE - SAN ANTONIO

By Leslie Bargsley and Leslie Friedlander

BACKGROUND

The tenth largest city in the United States, San Antonio is unique in several ways. Ethnically, it is a "minority-majority" municipality, composed of over half Mexican-Americans. In 1982, the estimated 791,282 residents represented 53 percent Mexican-Americans, 39 percent whites, and 8 percent blacks. Economically, the city has been plagued by poverty and unemployment, much of which is concentrated in the Mexican-American and black communities. The 1980 census indicates that the median annual income for whites is $5,000 greater than that of blacks and $4,000 more than that of Mexican-Americans. Employment in San Antonio is greatly dependent on the military and the federal government. Roughly 33 percent of the local payroll is derived from federal payments, while only 13 percent of the labor force is engaged in manufacturing.

Like many American cities, San Antonio has altered its electoral system as economic and social changes have occurred. A reform movement in the early 1950's led to the establishment of the council-manager form of government in 1952. This new structure provided for a nine member council elected at-large for specific seats. The mayor was appointed by the council from among its members.

Politics in the city from the mid-1950's to the 1970's were dominated by the Good Government League (GGL), an organization composed primarily of white businessmen who supported the reform. By running slates of candidates, the GGL won 73 of 81 council races during the period from 1955 to 1973. The power of the GGL began to decline in the early 1970's as

independent candidates won council seats and neighborhood groups such as Communities Organized for Public Services (COPS) began to challenge established policies. Faced with these forces as well as a growing division within the organization itself, the GGL formally disbanded in 1976.

In the early 1970's there was another movement to alter San Antonio's electoral system. However, the effort to adopt a mixed system in 1973 was rejected by voters. In 1976, after Texas' inclusion in the Voting Rights Act of 1975, the Justice Department disapproved the city's 1972-76 annexations on the grounds that they diluted the voting strength of minorities. This action made San Antonio the first city to run afoul of the Voting Rights Act based on a significant Mexican-American population. The Justice Department indicated that it would reconsider its decision should the city adopt fairly drawn single-member districts. While some San Antonians advocated challenging federal intervention, the city council moved to adopt a ten district, mayor at-large plan in October, 1976. This plan was narrowly approved by voters in January, 1977.

The first district election resulted in a primarily minority council: five Mexican-Americans, one black, and four whites. In 1979, the balance shifted back to a white majority. The current council, elected in 1983, is composed of four Mexican-Americans, five whites, and one black; the mayor is Mexican-American.

This study examines some of the results of the change to a single-member district system in San Antonio. Others have thoroughly researched many of the quantitative aspects of the change. Although some of these effects are indicated here, this study views the qualitative impact of the new system through the perceptions of San Antonians who experienced the

change. The opinions of twenty-six present and former elected officials, city, business, and community leaders, journalists, and academics were gathered by the authors and form the basis of this analysis. The questions posed, and thus, the results that follow, focus on changes in representativeness, style and content of decisionmaking, citizen participation, and campaign styles.

REPRESENTATIVENESS

Elected and Appointed Officials

The available quantitative evidence indicates that both ethnic and geographic interests are more broadly represented under the current system. Although some minorities did serve under the previous system, the city council, boards, and commissions now more closely reflect the city's ethnic composition. Before the change, residences of officials were largely concentrated in a few areas of the city. Districting has meant that all areas are represented.

These findings are generally reflected in residents' perceptions. Under the at-large system, most agreed that only those minorities "annointed" by the GGL were given the chance to serve. Districting, on the other hand, provides a greater opportunity for individuals to run and win; some current councilmembers do not believe they could have done either under the previous system.

The community also sees boards and commissions as more representative, and this perception is supported by an examination of membership on such bodies before and after the change. Whereas whites constituted 74 percent of the members on three major boards and commissions prior to districting,

membership now more closely approximates the ethnic composition of the city's population. In large part this is due to the expansion of most bodies to eleven members, allowing the mayor and each councilmember to make one appointment. Some respondents believe that while boards and commissions are more representative, further progress is still possible for both minorities and women.

Influence of Groups

Another measure of representativeness is the perceived change in influence of various groups within the city. All agree that districting was the "final deathknell" of the GGL; organized business interests are viewed as generally losing power as a result of the change. Most emphasize, however, that the business community is still an influential force, just not the exclusive force in the city. The general consensus is that districting served to more evenly balance the power of all interests. Thus, those who were previously excluded, minorities, the poor, the working class, neighborhood groups, and the south, east, and west portions of the city gained influence relative to business groups and the north side of town. There is some indication, however, that the business community is regaining its power, in part through contributions to district campaigns. Further, not all agree that community-based groups like COPS gained influence; some believe that those groups can now only direct their actions toward a few district representatives rather than all city councilmembers.

IMPACT ON DECISIONMAKING

Issues

The general expectation is that a change to a single-member district system will mean a narrowing of the scope of issues addressed by the city council. A few of those interviewed do feel that councilmembers now have no obligation to the city as a whole and, therefore, are concerned only with their "territory." However, a majority feel that the exclusive focus on districts by some councilmembers was greatest immediately after the change and that the current dominant concern is with the needs of the entire city. Councilmembers are seen as experts or specialists in their districts, and do advocate for their area, i.e. are parochial, yet are also viewed as concerned with citywide needs.

It is the contention of most respondents that citywide issues are better addressed under the current system. With broader representation, city government cannot focus on narrow concerns, but must balance many interests: business, ethnic, economic, and geographic.

Style

There is agreement that the style of decisionmaking has changed with the need to balance various interests. Debate, negotiation, compromise, and "horsetrading" have been more evident under the new system and have led to much longer city council meetings. It is felt that conflict particularly characterized the first council elected after the change, but that the current council works together effectively. Coalitions form but are generally dependent on the issues; voting patterns are less predictable

than under the at-large system.

Councilmembers state that they now spend more time on city business and that constituent requests have increased. They find that it is in their best interest to be accessible and responsive to groups and individuals in their districts.

Power

Respondents agree that the distribution of power in city government has changed but there is no consensus as to exactly how it has been altered. Many feel that legislative power has increased, and that councilmembers are more involved in the administration of the city. For example, several point out that the council now does in-depth budget review, whereas no such oversight existed under the previous system. Some see this as making management more accountable, while others feel it usurps the role of the city manager. The system does seem to require much greater interaction and cooperation between the council and the city manager.

Many feel the mayor's role has increased since, as the only official elected at-large, he must act as chief negotiator in order to respond to the city as a whole. There is disagreement, however, as to whether this change is due to the strength of the current mayor or is inherent in the districting system.

Service Distribution

There is strong agreement that city services are more equitably distributed under the current system. Several respondents indicate that certain minority and low-income areas were previously neglected simply because there was no one to point out problems or advocate for solutions. Now many believe each area receives attention because councilmembers are "experts" on their districts and are more accountable to their constituents.

A few of those interviewed feel that the low-income areas now receive a disproportionate share of services, in part because of federal aid. These respondents feel that the northside is now being neglected in the distribution of services.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Election returns indicate that voter participation declined by over 6 percent in some cases.[1] However, respondents' perceptions are that participation in the political affairs of the city has increased. Groups and individuals from all sectors of the city are more active, reflecting a new, broader range of participation. This is evident, according to many, in the growth of neighborhood organizations, in direct communications with councilmembers by groups and individuals, in attendance and participation in council meetings, and in campaigns. In addition, some feel citizens are more educated and sophisticated about politics and the issues that face the

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[1]See Chapter 3, Volume I

city.

Three major reasons are cited as causes for this wider activity. First, the new structure itself facilitates participation. Accessibility is valued, and mechanisms for promoting citizen participation, like evening city council meetings, have purposely been built into the system. Also, city councilmembers now require attention to their constituents in order to maintain support. Members often encourage organization and involvement by taking issues directly to groups and individuals. Second, many think that districting brought a greater identification with government which, in turn, made individuals more inclined to participate. Third, the gains made by previously excluded groups convinced many that they could influence decisions in the city. Thus, success and effectiveness bred greater involvement.

CAMPAIGN STYLES

There is general agreement that the change to single-member districts has influenced the style and financing of campaigns. The use of a grassroots approach to reaching voters has decreased reliance on public relations firms and mass media. Candidates utilize backyard rallies, "walking the district," and meetings with groups to gain support. Direct contact with constituents is possible with both a smaller geographic area and a smaller population group. A result of this direct approach, according to some, is a greater focus on those issues important to constituents.

Most of those interviewed believe that campaign costs are lower under the new system. It is pointed out that while the cost per vote may be

higher, the overall cost of a given election is less due to the different style of campaigning and to the smaller area represented. The opposing view, held by several, is that costs are higher now that the "efficient" strategy of slating is no longer used. There is agreement, however, that campaign contributions now come from a broader base of groups and individuals.

Incumbency remains a strong factor in determining winners under the single-member system; those who chose to run again are usually re-elected. Some see this as negative, breeding complacency, while others feel that it indicates that district councilmembers are responsive to their constituents.

CONCLUSIONS

From the accounts of the 26 San Antonians interviewed, it appears that districting has brought about a number of changes. Representation on elected and appointed bodies is perceived as broader and fairer. Previously excluded ethnic, economic, geographic, and other interests are more influential in city government, and the power of the long-dominant business community has decreased relatively. Many citizens see government, at all levels of the city, as more accountable and more accessible.

Although it seems that citywide, long-term issues continue to be addressed, some feel that city operations are less efficient and that neighborhood or district concerns receive a disproportionate amount of attention. Many believe, however, that this is the price to be paid for a pluralistic, democratic government.

According to many, districting has had another important effect in San

Antonio: stabilization. The inclusion of groups and interests who previously perceived themselves as outside of the political system provided a "pressure valve" necessary to maintain social stability.

Although many ascribe these changes directly to districting, others find causation difficult to assess. The increasing awareness of minority needs nationally, as reflected in the civil rights and voting rights legislation in the 1960's and 1970's, gave impetus to change in San Antonio. Many see COPS, the city's community-based advocacy group, as instrumental in achieving more equitable service delivery and greater citizen participation.

By adopting the single-member district system, San Antonio proved itself adaptable to both internal pressures from the community and to external pressures from the federal government. The city appears to have adapted rather smoothly to the change, and many citizens who initially were hesitant about the change now believe the city is generally operating well.

Most of those interviewed see commitment as the reason districting has been successful in San Antonio. Both the city leaders and the community as a whole have been committed to making the system work effectively. The mayor during the change provided the guidance necessary for a smooth transition; the current mayor provides the leadership to ensure that city government addresses the long-term development of San Antonio. After a conflict-laden first term, the city council has increasingly tried to combine district advocacy with cooperative planning for the city. The city bureaucracy has made citizen input and council needs a priority. Citizens, concerned with a stable and prosperous community, have generally been willing to work cooperatively. Thus, the dedication of the community and its leaders, according to many, has prevented many of the potential dangers

of districting from occurring.

CHAPTER TWO - FORT WORTH

by Judy Fitzgerald and Melanie Miller

BACKGROUND

Fort Worth, considered to be one of the major banking and manufacturing cities in West Texas, is the only Texas city in our study that lost population in the decade of the 1970s. Fort Worth's population fell from 393,979 in 1970 to 385,164 in 1980. This city has a diverse economy that includes strong banking and mercantile industries as well as a prominent aerospace industry.

From 1970 to 1980, the percentage of whites in the population dropped from seventy-one percent to sixty-four percent. The percentage of blacks in Fort Worth rose slightly from twenty percent in 1970 to twenty-three percent in 1980. The Mexican-American population increased from being eight percent in 1970 to twelve percent in 1980.[2] In 1907, when Fort Worth had a population of 70,000, the city first instituted an at-large system of elections. This system remained operational for seventy years. In 1925 the city changed its system of government to the council-manager form, which it retains today.

In 1967, the first black was elected to the City Council. Between 1967 and 1977, two blacks served on the council. Before 1977, no Mexican-American had ever served on a Fort Worth city council.

The first council elected by a district system consisted of one black male, one black female, one Mexican-American male, one white female, and

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[2]The remaining one percent of the population was classified as other for these years.

five white males - one serving as mayor. The current council consists of one white female, one Mexican-American male, two black males, and five white males - one serving as mayor.

Prior to the creation of districts, councilmembers sometimes lived within several blocks of each other on the affluent Southwest side of Fort Worth. These councilmembers were supported in their bids for election and re-election to the council by the Fort Worth business community consisting of several downtown banks and the city's only local, citywide newspaper.

Amendment III to the Fort Worth city charter which changed the municipal electoral system from an at-large to an eight-member, single-member district system with the mayor elected at-large, was passed on April 8, 1975. Although the Charter Revision Committee had suggested a five-four mixed system, the city council gave the voters a clear choice of an eight and one system or retention of their current at-large system. The amendment passed by a margin of 165 votes out of 30,000 cast. Many people interviewed suggested the reason for the council's placement of an 8-1 system on the ballot was the fact that polls showed an 8-1 system to be the most likely choice to fail.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the results of a change in electoral system from at-large to single-member districts in Fort Worth. The emphasis here is more on qualitative analysis than quantitative analysis. The opinions of twenty-seven Fort Worth citizens form the basis of our analysis. These twenty-seven people are of diverse backgrounds. They include present and past city councilmembers, present and past city staffers, journalists, academics, community and business leaders. The questions posed and opinions expressed in this survey focus on changes in representativeness, style and content of decisionmaking, citizen

participation, and campaign styles.

REPRESENTATIVENESS

Among the people interviewed for our study on Fort Worth, a general consensus existed that minorities did gain greater representation through the single-member district electoral system. However, some groups and associations that have memberships dispersed throughout the city mentioned that they may have lost some amount of influence due to the division of their membership into districts. Public safety associations such as the fire fighters' associations as well as some of the members of the Mexican-American community felt they may have suffered in their influence with the entire council.

Because the 12 percent of Fort Worth's population that is Mexican-American is not nearly as concentrated as is the black population, the Mexican-American community does not have a "safe" district, although the same Mexican-American has been elected from this district every time since 1977. It is generally felt that this council member knows his constituency very well and has been able to direct city funds toward renovation and rehabilitation projects in the different neighborhoods of his district.

The business community was not viewed as having lost any influence on the council, but only the ability to "control" elections as before. Coalitions that are formed on the council are fluid. They form around common interests and not strictly along racial lines.

Geographic and racial composition on various boards and commissions had not shown any significant diversification after the 1975 system change. As of September 30, 1983, however, a series of ordinances requires the vast majority of boards and commissions to have nine seats; one seat appointed

by the mayor and each councilmember serving from the same district as the appointee. This ordinance has been an important factor in equalizing racial and geographic representation on boards and commissions.

IMPACT ON DECISIONMAKING

The issues addressed by the city government have changed, according to the people interviewed, but agreement did not exist on why the issues had changed. Most people agreed that a new "sensitivity" to all neighborhood problems resulted from the change to single-member districts. Long-term planning, according to some, had not been neglected because of single-member districts. One person stated that development and zoning variances, not single-member districts, wreaked havoc on long-term planning. One assistant city manager said that now the city staff looks at the priorities of neighborhoods presented through councilmembers when allocating funds. Another assistant city manager said that the lack of funds due to the reduction in federal aid was the cause of any of these changes in Fort Worth. Both assistant city managers agreed that planning, especially capital improvement projects planning, was "better" due to the single-member district system because it allows the city staff to ascertain the priorities of the council and respond to them. A former city manager felt that the single-member district system obscured the councilmembers' view of long-range problems with neighborhood problems such as potholes. The distribution of funds and services is now seen by many people to be more equitable than before the election system change although one former city councilmember stated that in his opinion, federal funds were now being spent in poorer areas while city funds were still being spent almost exclusively in the wealthier areas.

City councilmembers generally said their constituents are concerned with neighborhood issues, just as they were before the system change. Most councilmembers feel that since the system change they have more constituents contacting them. However, several members mentioned they do not receive many calls and some members noted they get a few calls from other members' constituents.

City councilmembers are now more active in the day-to-day workings of city government. One city staffer said that single-member districts have increased the workload, but noted that this is advantageous since Fort Worth wanted a way to include citizen input in its decisionmaking process. Planning and equity of facilities and expenditures was seen by many of those interviewed as having been improved by the single-member district system.

According to most respondents, the distribution of actual decisionmaking power had not changed between the city council and the city manager because the provisions of Fort Worth's city charter prevented that. It was noted that by gathering, and disseminating information, city staff could wield great power over the city council. Political power outside the city council was not seen as changed, either. Several persons mentioned that the business establishment still holds "the power of the purse" in campaigns and minorities still have a difficult time with funding. It was stated by one former mayor that the business community's power is as effective as before the system change. It took people just one election to learn how to adapt to the new campaign techniques.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Voter participation was unusually high for the charter amendment election in 1975 as well as the two subsequent elections in 1977 and 1979. The patterns for 1981 and 1983 have returned to the "normal" voting pattern of much lower turnout. Citizen involvement in neighborhood organizations was unaffected by single-member districts. Fort Worth does not have a tradition of active neighborhood groups, but several people interviewed stated that these groups became the special constituencies for district councilmembers in some cases. Others felt that single-member districts displaced neighborhood groups. Participation in campaigns increased only slightly due to the need for personal contact campaigning within a district. Some minority community leaders felt that their communities were becoming more politically aware because they now felt as though they at least had a chance for the representation given by a seat on the city council.

In the city council election of April 1973, voter participation was sixteen percent. In 1975 when the city was still under an at-large system, voter participation for the city council election was 14.8 percent and 6.1 percent for the runoff. The charter election was held concurrently with the regular city election in 1975.

In the first single-member district election (1977), a 20.2 percent voter participation marked a relatively substantial increase over 1975. In 1979, the city council elections had 17.5 percent voter participation. In the runoff for mayor held three weeks later, voter participation was 30.1 percent. In 1981, voter participation was 5.7 percent. In the last election on April 2, 1983, participation was 6.5 percent when 11,613 voters cast ballots out of the 177,449 who were registered. These numbers show

the trend of voter participation dropping after the initial increase associated with the novelty of the new system.

CAMPAIGN STYLES

Campaign styles are decidedly different in a single-member district system than in an at-large system. Personal contact with the voters in a district becomes an important strategy. Door-to-door campaigns, yard signs, and smaller phone banks allow candidates a greater opportunity to be elected with less funding. Grassroots participation in the form of neighborhood volunteers becomes the backbone of many successful campaigns. Media becomes a much less important vehicle for candidate contact with voters.

Campaign sources for city council races are difficult to measure because of the two kinds of contributions: cash donations and in-kind contributions. Although financal records must be reported, in-kind contributions are not necessarily recorded. An office or business may be able to offer phone banks, personnel, and copying free of charge. Access to these resources is very valuable and it is an example of middle and lower income, working, and retired people not having that access. Because these resources are still needed and are still expensive, monied interests usually have little trouble finding a candidate willing to accept their aid. In the at-large system winners usually received between eight percent and twelve percent of their campaign funds from contributions of $50.00 or less. However, a number of winners have spent less than their opponents. In the first two district elections, the winners raised more than twenty percent of their funds from contributions of $50.00 or less. Their tactic for winning is usually a strong door-to-door, personal contact campaign.

Obviously, this type of campaign is very time consuming and usually the time necessary serves as an obstacle to working people, especially if they are not incumbents.

Incumbency on the Fort Worth city council is very important and turnover on the council is extremely low. Normally if an incumbent is not returned to office it is because that member chose not to run. This phenomenon existed before and continues to exist since the electoral system change.

Before the electoral system change, candidate slating existed in a very loose and informal sense. Several people interviewed said that slates were fairly ineffective because of the Fort Worth voters' "independent streak". But, one political group gave an example of the existence and power of informal slating when they noted what they felt was difficulty in placing ads in the city newspaper for candidates they supported but who were not members of the informal slate. Since the system change, no formal attempt has been made to run a slate of candidates.

In general, campaign costs per voter are higher with single-member districts than with an at-large system, but overall, a candidate's campaign costs are much lower. Targeting the approximately 55,000 people in one district is cheaper than running a citywide campaign with the more expensive types of media. Neighborhood newspapers have gained some campaign advertising because of efforts by candidates to target one district and not waste money by advertising in the city's singular citywide daily.

OTHER COMPARATIVE EFFECTS OF THE SINGLE-MEMBER DISTRICT SYSTEM

The single-member district electoral system has led to changes in the

attitude of people toward their council, the council's view of its role, and even a modification of the system through which the city of Fort Worth deals with citizen complaints and suggestions. Many people feel that they have one person on the council who must be specifically accountable to them. They like the idea of knowing one individual to call when the need arises instead of making a random choice of one of nine councilmembers. Councilmembers generally feel that they are in contact with their constituents more often, although a former and current councilmember both said nothing changed in the number of calls they receive. Some members felt they spent most of their time dealing with citizen requests, while another said he spent most of his time closely following the actions of his fellow councilmembers. The varying personalities of the the different areas in Fort Worth show up in the issues with which individual councilmembers concern themselves. The wealthier Southwest districts are concerned with crime and parks while the East side district, traditionally Fort Worth's "stepchild", spends time fighting off landfills that are proposed for that part of town.

The Fort Worth city manager's office initiated an "action center" about the time of the first single-member district election. This center is the avenue through which councilmembers and citizens can channel complaints and suggestions to the appropriate city department. Most councilmembers view the center as a valuable tool. Citizens also noted the positive aspects of having a "direct line" into the city. City staffers like the more orderly flow of citizen input through the action center. Some parties, however, differed on the degree of effectiveness of the action center.

An issue unrelated to the electoral system is council pay. Fort Worth

councilmembers receive $10.00 a week for their service to the city. In an election held on November 8, 1983, voters defeated an attempt to raise the pay to $75.00 a week. This amount is still not enough to compensate councilmembers for time spent on city duties rather than on their jobs. Many people feel that compensation should, at most, make up for wages lost at a job due to council work. However, one former mayor said he felt that members should not be paid because, "if they can't manage their own money, I don't want them managing mine."

CHAPTER THREE - RICHMOND

By Scott Harrison and Deborah Sagen

BACKGROUND

Richmond, Virginia, is a fairly small southern community located on the banks of the James River. The city has long held an important position both within the state and in the South because of its past status as the capital of the Confederacy and its current status as the capital of Virginia. Today, almost one quarter of Richmond's workforce is employed in government service, while approximately 20 percent are employed in manufacturing industries. As of 1979, the median annual income for white households in the city was $20,455, compared to $12,612 for black households.

Richmond's population composition has shifted radically in the past thirty years. Between 1950 and 1980, the population shifted from a 68 percent white majority to an estimated 51 percent black majority. Moreover, between 1970 and 1980, the city's population declined from 249,400 to 219,200. While the ethnic composition in the city changed significantly between 1950 and 1969, minority representation on the Richmond City Council did not. In 1964 only one black served on the at-large council, three served in 1966, and one served in both 1968 and 1970.

This underrepresentation of minorities, coupled with the 1970 annexation of twenty-three square miles of Chesterfield County, which lowered Richmond's black population to 42 percent, led Curtis Holt, Sr. to file suit against the city. A black civic activist who failed to win a position on the 1970 council, Holt claimed that the annexation resulted in

the dilution of black voting strength citing constitutional violations as well as violations of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 in his suits. As a consequence of Holt's claims and related annexation suits, Richmond was barred from holding councilmanic elections between 1970 and 1977.

In 1975, the Supreme Court ruled that the Chesterfield annexation would be valid if blacks were allowed a proportional share of representation. The Court remanded the case to a lower Federal court, where nine single-member districts -- four predominately white, four black, and one swing district -- were approved. This district plan was accepted by the Federal Court in 1976, and in March of 1977 a special council election was held. Regular council elections have been held bienially since 1978.

By the time the 1977 special election was held, Richmond's "swing district" had acquired a black majority; thus, since changing to single-member districts, Richmond has always had a majority of blacks on the council, including the mayor, who is elected by council. Furthermore, the single-member district system specifies that council elections are decided by a plurality vote such that no run-off elections are held. This has helped the two long-standing slating groups, the predominantly white Teams for Progress, and the predominantly black Crusade for Voters, to concentrate their campaign efforts on one set of biennial elections.

Currently, the Richmond City Charter outlines a council-manager form of government. The eight councilmembers receive a $12,000 salary, and the mayor receives $14,000. Prior to 1982, salaries were $6,000 and $7,500 respectively.

Twenty-three key government officials, councilmembers, and civic leaders were interviewed about the effects of the change from an at-large

system to the single-member district system in Richmond. Although participants chosen represented various occupations and community viewpoints, each respondent was asked to focus on the impact the electoral system change had on representativeness, decisionmaking, citizen participation, and campaign styles.

REPRESENTATIVENESS

The change in electoral systems unquestionably has provided fairer representation for blacks and for the poorer areas of the city. A few respondents, however, have questioned whether that representation is more effective. These few, mostly whites, feel that the district councils have been less effective in addressing the city's problems than the at-large councils and therefore, no one has enjoyed effective representation. One prominent black leader cautioned that a councilmember's color did not ensure that that person would be a better representative for the citizens of that color.

The representation of neighborhood groups also has been greatly enhanced by the system change. Neighborhoods now have a specific councilmember to whom they can go with their problems. Most councilmembers indicated that their constituents were primarily interested in neighborhood issues. Councilmembers often attend neighborhood and civic group meetings in an effort to maintain contact with their constituents, as they perceive these groups to be much more politically influential during district council races. One official, the director of a citywide program, expressed concern about this new focus on district-wide groups, however. He has experienced some trouble dealing with the new council because his program operates in several districts and often falls prey to political pressures

between conflicting district interests regarding the allocation of program funds and services.

Respondents were somewhat divided on perceptions of the effects of the electoral system change on the representation of the business community's interests. Many residents felt that the political power of the business community had declined, in that it did not exercise as much influence in the election of the council. However, the council still recognizes the need to work with the powerful business community because of the latter's strong hold on the economic power of the city. For example, under Richmond's first black mayor, lawyer Henry Marsh III, the council's rhetoric sounded less favorable toward business interests, yet public-private partnerships and numerous downtown development projects were actively pursued by the Marsh-led council.

The general perception is that Richmond city government is now more responsive to citizen groups. Several community leaders stated that it was easier to raise issues in the city and many perceived the political environment as being more open. While this new environment has resulted in a heightened level of council "bickering," few felt that such skirmishes have led to less effective representation.

IMPACT ON DECISIONMAKING

Those interviewed generally agreed that the change to single-member districts has changed the focus of councilmembers. There is not, however, a consensus that the change in the electoral system has substantially affected the council decisionmaking process or the services delivered by the city government.

All councilmembers interviewed felt that they had much more of a

district focus than did the members of previous at-large councils. Councilmembers listed constituent work and the consideration of special use permits as the activities that demanded most of their time. Despite the change in focus, however, most respondents felt that the substantive issues addressed by Council had not changed. Some of the blacks and liberal whites perceive a greater emphasis on human and social service issues, while some conservative whites felt that the council's view had become myopic and that council was less effective in dealing with long term, citywide issues.

Councilmembers did not agree about the change in council politics since the adoption of single-member districts. Polarization and racial bloc voting seem to have been standard operating procedure during Henry Marsh's mayoral reign. Most believed, however, that the polarization was more a result of personalities than of the change in the election system. Vote trading and cross-racial, philosophical, and single-issue coalitions have become more frequent since Mayor Roy West assumed office in 1982.

Although the general consensus is that the institutional distribution of power has not shifted among the council, the city manager, and boards and commissions, some interviewees felt that the interactions between these city powers have changed. Some school board members and civic leaders, for example, feel that educational issues have become highly politicized. A dispute over council appointments to the school board has resulted in a controvesial law suit over the appointment powers. While board members felt that politics can hinder the effective implementation of education policy in the city, they have some appreciation for the heightened awareness and interest on the council and in the community. Some respondents felt that although there are greater opportunities for

minorities and women, the politicization of the appointment process has affected the quality of board members. They complain that the council pays too much attention to the district in which the applicants reside, rather than the applicants' merits, when it makes appointments.

The vast majority of respondents felt that the city staff is very professional in its day to day operations and that services are being distributed equitably. Some observers feel that the city staff is more responsive to citizen complaints under the new system because councilmembers get a greater number of complaints from constituents and have a greater stake in passing complaints effectively to responsible city officials. A few respondents, however, perceived that the district interests of some council members have interfered with the service delivery process thereby causing friction between the manager and council.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Respondents were asked to identify and describe two types of participation in Richmond: voter participation and active participation in civic or neighborhood organizations. Most respondents felt that in those single-member districts where candidates run unopposed or with little opposition, voter participation had declined. Precinct data gathered shows that, in general, voter participation has declined. In the 1970 at-large election voter turnout in selected precincts averaged at 52 percent. In both the 1977 and 1982 single-member district race, however, voter turnout for similar precincts averaged at 47 percent and 41 percent respectively.

Black civic leaders and councilmembers claimed increased voter participation in the black community with voter registration drives and an increase in the number of black council candidates being cited as possible

causes. Voter turnout data in precincts with a substantial black population do not support these perceptions. In one precinct turnout did increase, but in the others the turnout averaged 48 percent in 1970, and 33.5 percent in 1982. Voter participation was said to have increased in districts with particularly heated council races -- in the swing district, for example.

Participation in civic and neighborhood organizations, on the other hand, has significantly increased in Richmond since 1977 and most respondents found citizen participation on the rise. Councilmembers pointed to increased citizen activity in biweekly council meetings and the formation of issue-oriented groups and neighborhood organizations. Neighborhood and civic activists often described the growing interest Richmond residents have in local organizations, pointing out that the city currently contains 111 active neighborhood and civic groups. According to civic leaders, these organizations now actively solicit the help and advice of their respective councilmembers prior to the onset of particular problems or heightening of political issues. Only three persons interviewed suggested that there had been no change or a decrease in citizen participation. Each of these respondents cited increasing apathy in more affluent Richmond neighborhoods as indicative of declining citizen participation.

CAMPAIGN STYLES

All politically active participants were asked to differentiate between the style of campaigning in at-large council races and strategies used in district races. Every respondent cited significantly less use of the news media. Candidates now rely more heavily on door-to-door

campaigning, district mailings, and district-wide rallies. While campaign spending has never been exhorbitant in Richmond -- most candidates spend less than $10,000 -- candidates reportedly spend less than they would have under the at-large system. However, campaign finance data does not exist prior to 1970 making quantitative comparisons impossible.

One notable change in the style of Richmond's council campaigns concerns the role of the two slating groups. Before the election change, the predominantly white slating group, Teams for Progress, and its black counterpart, the Crusade for Voters, organized shortly before council races and endorsed different, but sometimes overlapping slates of candidates.

Currently, Teams for Progress selects, finances, and endorses white candidates only. In 1982, for example, Teams spent $56,410 and endorsed eight candidates. Once elections are held, however, the group officially disbands. The Crusade for Voters, on the other hand, is no longer organized solely at campaign time. It now conducts year-round voter registration and education drives throughout the city, and often lobbies before Council. The organization now endorses candidates in each district -- white and black -- and partially finances many campaigns.

Most respondents felt that the sophistication previously exhibited by Teams in organizing intensive at-large races was undermined by the current need for grassroots campaigns. The Crusade has fared better and has controlled black districts since 1977. A few key black leaders, however, see growing factionalism within the black community, especially between the Crusade and the politically active Black Baptist Minister's Association. These respondents felt that factionalism could dilute the strength of the Crusade and of the entire black community. It is interesting to note that Roy West, the current mayor, won election without the backing of either

slating group.

With the perceived shift of political power in mind, a number of respondents spoke of the growing importance of new political coalitions in Richmond. District political organizations, biracial coalitions, and an increase in political participation by neighborhood groups have all added fuel to council campaigns. However, incumbency in the city remains a strong factor in the outcome of council races. Some districts go uncontested due to effective incumbents; races involving an incumbent are usually viewed with political disinterest.

CONCLUSION

All black respondents and many whites view the single-member district system favorably. The most common complaints about the new system concern increased friction on the council and in some districts, voter apathy. While many viewed the increased debate on Council favorably, others described it as indicative of polarization. Only two respondents, however, attributed friction among councilmembers directly to the change in the electoral system. Most attributed it to the behavior of individual members or to the sharp transition from a white majority on the council to a black majority.

Some districts in Richmond experience low voter turnout because of lack of competition. In districts with no competition or a strong incumbent, voters have few incentives to go to the polls and in some cases citizens see little reason to vote for only one of nine candidates. Many respondents advocated a mixed system. Although a mixed system would allow residents to vote for a majority of council some felt that it would force the council to widen its perceived district focus.

Supprters of the single-member district system find the city council and city government more responsive to Richmond residents. Many cited a marked increase in citizen participation and in community affairs. Local leaders stated that residents are no longer reluctant to raise issues and councilmembers find many more citizens actively participating in council meetings and activities.

Furthermore, representation for black districts and poorer areas of Richmond is believed to be more equitable. Not only is the council turning its attention to the problems of these districts, but the use of grassroots campaign techniques makes it less expensive -- and perhaps easier -- for a more representative group of citizens to run for council.

CHAPTER FOUR - HOUSTON

By Beth Beck and Pierce Homer

BACKGROUND

Houston is an important reference in this study because it was the first mixed system allowed under the Voting Rights Act, because Justice Department intervention grew out of the city's annexation of surrounding areas, and because efforts to modify the city's election system occurred during a period of truly phenomenal population growth. Since 1950, Houston's population has grown from 600,000 to 1.6 million and its land area has increased from seventy to over 550 square miles. Population growth in minority communities has been equally explosive: the black share of Houston's population grew from twenty-one percent in 1950 to twenty-eight percent today, while the Mexican-American share increased from six to eighteen percent during the same period.

From 1942 to 1955, a majority of Houston's city council was elected from single-member districts. In 1955, Houston voters reinstituted at-large elections for all councilmembers with a district residency requirement for five of the eight council seats. Academic and journalistic observers generally agree that councils elected after 1955 rarely initiated public policy and only occasionally served as an access point through which diverse community interests could be expressed. While Houston around it changed and grew, the city council remained static, preferring to watch as the mayor and the business community dominated the city's policy process. The city's electoral system ensured that the city council would be a static island in an ocean of change.

During the 1960's, black and Mexican-American leaders challenged

council's closed, unresponsive style of decisionmaking and pointed out the underrepresentation of minorities on council. They were joined in the 1970's by newly-formed neighborhood groups, feminists, gays, residents of recently annexed areas, and even disaffected westside Republicans. This broad array of critics called for some form of district representation on council. In 1966, a charter revision commission called for a return to single-member districts. In a 1976 straw ballot, Houston voters approved the concept of a single-member city council by 84,785 votes to 70,061. The Houston city council refused to act on either request and changes in the city's election system failed to materialize. In 1976, the federal district court dismissed a suit brought by blacks and Mexican-Americans. The suit contended that the distribution of municipal services was inequitable. The court found the city's system "equitable" and refused to order changes in the electoral system. The question of vote dilution under the Voting Rights Act still remained unresolved.

In 1979, the Department of Justice invoked its preclearance powers under the Voting Rights Act and advised the city council that annexations made in 1977 and 1978 would not be approved because they diluted minority voting strength in Houston. The Department of Justice stated that the problem could be remedied by the adoption of single-member districts. However, the Department deviated from previous policy and indicated that the city might retain some at-large seats in its electoral system. For the first time under the Voting Rights Act, the Department gave its blessing to a mixed electoral system.

The mixed election scheme was strongly opposed by black and Mexican-American voters. Nevertheless, bloc voting and large turnouts in white precincts ensured the adoption of charter amendments that enlarged council

from 8 to 14 members and required that nine councilmembers be elected from single-member districts and that five councilmembers be elected at-large. The mayor retained powers of appointment, the ability to set council agenda and formulate the budget. Houston's mayor can vote with the council but she has no direct veto authority. She currently earns $81,568 annually, while at-large and district councilmembers both earn $25,480 annually.

This study is concerned with the impacts of a change from an at-large system of representation on city council to an enlarged, mixed system of electing Houston's city council. Interviews were conducted in Houston with a total of twenty-seven key individuals, including councilmembers, city staffers, businessmen and women, neighborhood and community leaders, and academics. Respondents were asked to characterize the change from an eight member, plus mayor, at-large city council to the current mixed system of council representation. Respondents were asked to identify the impacts of the change on the council's representativeness, decisionmaking, campaign styles, and citizen participation.

REPRESENTATIVENESS

The 1979 change in electoral systems affected the representativeness of Houston's city council in three discernible areas. The ethnic and geographic makeup of council is clearly more diverse. Council more actively formulates policy. The configuration of local power has also been somewhat altered. Nearly every respondent mentioned that many of these changes were underway long before the 1979 change in election systems. The changes, they noted, are extremely complex. To attribute causality to a simple change in electoral systems may be an oversimplification. Many also cautioned against overemphasizing the impacts of the change since the mayor

and the city's business elite still dominate Houston's decisionmaking process.

Since 1979, the ethnic makeup of council more closely approximates the population at large. Prior to that date, no women, no Mexican-Americans, and only one black had served on council in this century. Today, seven white males share the rostrum with four blacks, one Mexican-American, and three women (the mayor is a woman). The change in the geographic makeup of council is not so pronounced because the previous at-large electoral system had five residency districts and because, at present, three of the five at-large councilmembers reside close to one another in southwest Houston. Since the change in electoral systems, Houston's city council more closely approximates the ethnic and geographic makeup of the city. The same is not true for three key appointed boards. Prior to 1979, Anglo males dominated the City Planning Commission, the Houston Parks Board, and the Metropolitan Transit Authority. Today, Anglo males continue to dominate board membership in all three cases. The City Planning Commission, for example, only had one female and two blackmembers between 1971 and 1975. In 1979 and 1981, the years immediately following the change in election systems, no women and only one black served on the Commission. The Planning Commission currently has eighteen members, including ex-officio appointments. The composition of the Planning Commission has changed since 1981; but because 1971, 1975, 1979, and 1981 are sample years for this study, only this data has been considered.

Respondents indicated that the council's role in formulating policy has changed in three ways since 1979: council actively initiates specific policies; it facilitates the expression of diverse community viewpoints; and council in some cases actively solicits community viewpoints. In sum,

the new councils are more responsive.

Since 1979, council has moved, without a mayoral or business directive, to rewrite the city's affirmative action plan, to restrict billboard placement within the city, and to toughen the city's fire ordinances. Most respondents agree that previous councils would not have initiated these kinds of policies and that voters now expect their councilmembers to do more than passively affirm decisions made by an unresponsive elite.

Most community leaders interviewed felt that district representation has made the council more accessible to them and that the council acts as a conduit for expressing and addressing community issues. Respondents cited the marked increase of conflict in council meetings and the appearance of dissent within minority groups now that there is less of a demand for public unanimity as evidence that more diverse community viewpoints are receiving a public airing in Houston.

Several district candidates actively solicit constituent viewpoints. This cultivation of diverse viewpoints may take the form of neighborhood meetings or it may simply arise from the fact that many minority constituents feel more comfortable dealing with someone who is from the same part of town or who speaks their own language. A number of neighborhood leaders felt that their voices were being heard for the first time.

Although the configurations of local power have changed since 1979, some disagree over which groups are more influential and which are the result of changes in the electoral system. Nearly every respondent agreed that blacks, as a group, have fared very well under the new electoral system. Two at-large and two district councilmembers are black. The

relative concentration of blacks in Houston makes the coincidence of geographic and ethnic interests much more likely. However, a representative of a major Mexican-American group stated that "surprisingly, single-member districts have not helped us." This sentiment is not unique in the Mexican-American community and may arise from bitter divisions over the personality of the only Mexican-American councilmember.

While Mexican-American gains under the new electoral system are inconclusive, several citywide neighborhood groups have gained influence since 1979. The Gay Political Caucus and The Metropolitan Organization (a COPS-style organization of church-affiliated community groups) are widely seen as "winners" under the new system of representation, although both groups credit much of their success to persistent organizing efforts instead of a simple alteration in the electoral system. Neighborhood activists believe their organizations have gained influence as direct result of the change in electoral systems although many others believe that neighborhood groups are still very weak in Houston.

In spite of these very real changes in the distribution of power in Houston, it is important to remember that Houston is still a businessman's city. The Chamber of Commerce continues to exert tremendous political influence over city policy. Some individual development interests may have experienced a loss of political influence, but that may stem from a failure to "learn the new game" of dealing with several councilmembers instead of just the mayor's office. The change in electoral systems may have altered the relative influence of firms and individuals within the business and development communtities. One respondent said that "these changes may be as much the product of liberalized attitudes in the business community as the result of any fine tuning in the electoral system."

IMPACT ON DECISIONMAKING

The 1979 change in electoral systems affected the council's style and process of decisionmaking, its relation to the mayor, the provision of basic services within the city, and the city's growth policies. Fears of parochial decisionmaking have not been borne out, but respondents were nearly unanimous in their belief that such a development is possible.

The current council is a much more open, deliberative body than the ones that existed prior to 1979, although it may be less efficient as a decisionmaker. Tortuous discussion, open conflict, and split decisions have made council the subject of heightened media attention. The entire process is more cumbersome as well: capital budgets have to be broken down into their district components; district councilmembers and department heads have had to struggle to redefine their relationships; shifting coalitions present a "public interest" perspective to challenge any "inside" deals like the 1978 cable franchise awards.

Part of this alleged inefficiency springs from council's altered relation to the mayor. Council-mayor relations were evolving independently of the change in electoral systems. In 1978, for instance, council's pay was raised from $3,600 to $20,000 (it now stands at $25,480). In 1980, council more than doubled its support staff and many councilmembers began to use volunteer assistance extensively. In 1980, council requested complete agendas from the mayor instead of the traditional list of discussion topics. Today, Houston's council is more like a full time , properly staffed legislative body. Although most councilmembers are not full time, the council itself is no longer a passive extension of the mayor. Respondents were extremely divided on whether the change in electoral systems helped make council into an active legislative body.

Having partial district representation on council has affected service delivery in three ways. First, minority and community groups in the poorer parts of town feel that they receive more city services and capital projects as a direct result of district representation. Even though a number of city administrators and former officials feel that these changes are not significant, neighborhood leaders feel that service delivery and capital budgeting are more equitable under the districted councils. Second, several minority respondents emphasized that minority residents of Houston are easily intimidated by the bureaucracy and "depend" on their district representatives for basic services. Third, several respondents noted significant change in the distribution of federal block grants, although we were unable to independently verify these changes.

In addition to service delivery, there have been marked changes in the city's land use and annexation policies since 1979. The previous cycle of uncontrolled growth, followed by the creation of special districts to accommodate the growth, followed by annexation, has been broken. Council recently enacted a setback ordinance for new commercial structures. That ordinance marked a radical break from the development community. One academic observer also felt that the City of Houston was less aggressive in its annexation policies than it might be under an at-large system. It is not possible to independently evaluate these claims.

Respondents were ambivalent about the existence of parochial decisionmaking in the new district format. Many felt that "ward politics" was a real possibility, especially in a total single-member district format. However, no one offered concrete examples of parochial decisionmaking by council.

CAMPAIGN STYLES

The change in Houston's method of electing city council affected the size and composition of its candidate pool. While good historical data is not yet available for campaign finance and styles, the mixed system offers some built in comparisons between district and at-large campaigns. Respondents and the existing data both indicate that incumbency is the single most important factor affecting a candidate's chances of success.

More candidates as well as a more diverse group of candidates vied for office after the change to a mixed system of council representation in 1979. However, the table below indicates that the impacts of the change were far less pronounced in 1981 and 1983: incumbency may dampen competition in district as well as at-large races. Houston's mixed system offers no evidence that district races are more contested than at-large races.

NUMBER OF COUNCIL CANDIDATES

	1971	1975	1979		1981		1983	
	AL	AL	Dist	AL	Dist	AL	Dist	AL
WHITE MALES	17	19	37	11	11	11	14	9
WOMEN	4	2	12	5	2	3	4	6
BLACKS	2	4	19	2	6	2	10	4
MEXICAN-AMERICANS	1	0	3	1	2	2	3	1

Number of candidates for Houston City Council in the two years we have chosen to compare before and after the change to a mixed system.

A historical comparison of campaign finance is not possible because complete data are not yet available. The mixed system, however, offers some built in comparisons. Conventional wisdom has it that at-large races

are more expensive than district races, that at-large candidates use the broadcast media while district candidates use grassroots campaign techniques, and that at-large candidates have different funding sources than district candidates. While most respondents agreed that these notions are generally true, several counter examples were offered. A highly contested district race can cost as much as $100,000 while an uncontested at-large race can cost as little as $80,000. Most district candidates rely on block walking, district meetings, and newsletters. But district candidates have relied on the broadcast media to reach potential voters.

The contention that district candidates also receive contributions solely from small, district contributors appears to be unfounded. Several respondents noted that large campaign contributors funded friendly district candidates as well as at-large and mayoral candidates. Some respondents indicated that while campaign costs decreased immediately after than change in electoral systems, costs began to creep back up as more resources were required to unseat the incumbents.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

It is not yet clear how the change in electoral systems has affected voter participation in Houston. Complete data are not yet available. However, most respondents felt that voter turnouts have continued to be low, particularly in the Mexican-American precincts. In some other areas of town where voters felt their vote had no impact under the previous at-large system, the voting levels are believed to have increased. The impacts of the change in electoral systems on voter participation appear to be less than dramatic.

On the other hand, the presence of more candidates and the

revitalization of grassroots campaign techniques have induced more ordinary citizens to become personally involved in the local election process. District candidates cannot afford large paid campaign staffs. The change in electoral systems, most respondents felt, increased the level and scope of citizen participation in campaign, community, slating, neighborhood, and issue-oriented organizations.

CONCLUSIONS ON THE MIXED SYSTEM OF REPRESENTATION

Most of the literature on city council representation is concerned with the merits of at-large versus single-member electoral systems. However, most respondents approved of the mixed system in Houston, including several who were originally critical of the 9-5 plan. A small but articulate group of liberals and minorities still opposes the mixed plan and insists that full minority representation cannot be achieved until all council representation is district representation.

Arguments against the mixed system in Houston include its minority opposition in 1979, the perceived unresponsiveness of at-large councilmembers to neighborhood and community interests, the geographic concentration of at-large representatives, and the disparate workload of at-large and district councilmembers. Blacks and Mexican-Americans voted against the 9-5 plan in 1979 by margins ranging from ninety to sixty percent. Minorities felt at the time that no one elected at-large would be responsive to their particular needs and concerns. Today, many neighborhood and minority group leaders suggest a need for a system of checks and balances, where the at-large councilmembers balance the differing district viewpoints. Critics point out that this may not be possible when four of the five at-large councilmembers come from affluent

southwest Houston. The mayor and two district councilmembers also come from this area, making it home to seven of the city's fifteen elected officials. Similar imbalances pervade the workload of councilmembers. During Hurricane Alicia, for example, district representatives received as many as 200 calls in a day while at-large representatives as few as twenty. District councilmembers feel that they bear an unfair share of the council's workload.

In spite of these arguments, most respondents felt that the 9-5 plan was appropriate for Houston. Every respondent indicated clearly that Houston's mixed system of representation did not create a bicameral or "House of Lords" situation. Some minority group leaders also felt that being able to vote for both kinds of councilmembers -- a total of six out of fourteen -- actually maximized their voting strength. These same minority leaders opposed a recent change to single-member districts in a Houston school district feeling that a majority of the elected school board could no longer be held accountable to the minority community.

A few respondents also noted that the mixed system may provide a means for introducing minority candidates to the citywide electorate. Many noted that district councilman Anthony Hall received sufficient media attention as a district representative to run seriously as an at-large candidate. If this is true, the mixed system may offer a means to reduce voter polarization and to increase the number of minorities holding city wide offices.

CHAPTER FIVE - DALLAS

By Claire Brewer and Jim Witcher

BACKGROUND

The City of Dallas, a banking and commercial center in North Texas, is the second largest city in Texas, with a population of more than 900,000. Although the city is growing, the rate of population growth was only about seven percent between 1970 and 1980, primarily because the city is surrounded by suburbs and therefore limited in its ability to expand. The minority population in Dallas has increased in the past decade from 34 percent to 44 percent. In 1970, the population was composed of 25 percent blacks, eight percent Mexican-Americans, 66 percent whites and one percent other; in 1980, the population was composed of 29 percent blacks, 12 percent Mexican-Americans, 57 percent whites and two percent other.

Dallas is governed by a council-manager form of government. Currently, the city council has 11 members, eight elected from single-member districts and three elected at-large (one of whom is the mayor). Both district and at-large councilmembers are elected by a majority vote. Each councilmember and the mayor receives $50 per meeting, including committee meetings.

The City of Dallas changed from an at-large electoral system to an eight single-member district, three at-large (8-3) mixed system in 1975 as a result of litigation brought by blacks and Mexican-Americans against a coalition that had controlled city politics since the late 1920s. The Citizens Charter Association (CCA), a local political party that grew out of efforts to adopt a council-manager form of government, and the Dallas Citizens Council (DCC), which formulated policies, comprised the

controlling coalition. From the late 1920s until the early 1970s, the CCA was unbeatable. The CCA candidates for the 11 at-large seats did not campaign individually, but were promoted as a team. The CCA was able to retain control of the city council through carefully chosen slates of candidates and money.[3]

In 1971, Albert Lipscomb, a black defeated in a council election, filed a complaint in U.S. District Court. Initially, his suit was dismissed, but was remanded to the district court after appeal. The case was reconstituted before a single judge as a class action suit on behalf of all blacks in the city. The major argument became the dilution of the blacks' voting power rather than "one-person-one-vote." As a result, Dallas' at-large system was found constitutionally infirm in January of 1975. The parties in the suit offered three plans for a new system: an 8-3 plan, proposed by the city; a 10-1 plan, proposed by the plaintiffs; and an 11-0 plan, also proposed by the plaintiffs. The court accepted the 8-3 proposal and the judge ordered the 8-3 plan to be implemented for the April of 1975 election. After an appeal by the black plaintiffs, who wanted either a 10-1 or 11-0 plan,to the Court of Appeals, the case was handed to the Supreme Court, which upheld the U.S. District Courts decision.[4] Consequently, the City of Dallas has held elections under an 8-3 mixed system since 1975.

The following sections are composed of information gathered by interviewing 30 members of Dallas' black, white and Mexican-American

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[3]Arnold Fleishman, The Adoption of 8-3 Plan in Dallas. Austin: The University of Texas, 1982. p. 1-3.

[4]Ibid., 6-7.

communities, including councilmembers, past and current, members of neighborhood organizations, members of various minority organizations and members of other community groups. The purpose of the interviews was to gather the perceptions of various segments of Dallas' population about how the change to a mixed system affected city government. Four areas were examined in detail: representativeness, decision making, citizen participation and campaign styles.

REPRESENTATIVENESS

The influence of minorities and neighborhood groups in city affairs grew significantly after Dallas' change to a mixed system. However, gains have not been as pronounced for the Mexican-American community as they have been for the blacks, primarily because Mexican-Americans are geographically dispersed in Dallas. In fact, while the blacks are a majority in two of the council districts, no district has a majority of Mexican-Americans. Special interest groups, such as environmentalists and consumers, and low to moderate income classes also gained influence, although not to the extent of blacks and neighborhood groups. Most interviewees felt that the CCA/DCC power structure, affluent Whites and the business community lost influence, relative to other groups, as a result of the change. One of the biggest indications of CCA's loss of influence over city hall is the fact that the group no longer controls the election of candidates through slates and money.

The majority of community and neighborhood leaders interviewed felt that the city council is more accessible and more responsive to their needs since the change. For instance, current councilmembers' campaign platforms emphasized neighborhood protection during the 1983 race. In response to

those promises, the councilmembers voted against proposed road widenings in East Dallas, commissioned a study of a controversial commercial and residential area near Greenville Avenue, and agreed to plans to restrict the scope of development in another area of the city. In addition, two representatives have launched a community planning forum in their North Dallas districts to discuss the consequences of the area's rapid growth. Most community members cited the ability to get issues raised and discussed as signs of their increased influence in city government. In addition, groups such as LULAC, the Black Chamber of Commerce and others noted that they now are contacted by the council for suggestions for appointments to boards and commissions and for input into the decisionmaking process.

The majority of those interviewed felt that geographical interests are represented more fairly on boards and councils than before the change. The method of council appointments to Dallas' approximately 28 boards and commissions virtually insures geographical representation. For boards and commissions with 11 or more members, each councilmember can make at least one appointment. For example, the Motion Picture Classification Board is composed of 26 members, therefore, each councilmember makes two appointments with the balance appointed by the entire council through a nomination and voting process. While racial interests still are not thought to be equitably represented on boards and commissions, the situation has improved in recent years. In fact, data collected on three major boards, the Civil Service Board, the Planning and Zoning Commission and the Parks and Recreation Board, shows that minority representation on boards and commissions has improved since the change to the district system. During both the 1971-73 and 1973-75 council terms membership on the five person Civil Service Board included only one minority. Currently,

three of the five members are minorities. Overall, blacks now hold about 24.5 percent of the 293 council-appointed seats, while Mexican-Americans occupy about 8.5 percent; yet, minority representation tends to be higher on the less influential boards, according to an October 9, 1983 Dallas Times Herald article. Both blacks and Mexican-Americans remain underrepresented with respect to their proportion of the city's population. According to a city staff member, economic factors probably affect the racial composition of boards and commissions because those positions are voluntary. Many in lower socio-economic groups cannot afford the time off from work needed to participate on a board or commission.

Council effectiveness has changed according to most of the interviewees. Because the council does not speak with one voice anymore, it does not make decisions as quickly and efficiently as it did before the change. Many felt that effect is not necessarily negative, saying that the council now is more effective in making decisions that are responsive to more needs. However, others said that increased bickering and increased parochial interests represented on the council has decreased its effectiveness significantly, especially because councilmembers cannot work out compromises on many issues.

IMPACT ON DECISIONMAKING

In evaluating the changed system's impact on decisionmaking in city government, four areas were considered: focus of issues addressed by council, shift in power, delivery of services and role of councilmembers. Although the general focus of issues and locus of power did not change significantly, the role of councilmembers and the delivery of services were affected.

With respect to the focus and types of issues addressed by councils since the change, the consensus was that the emphasis on long-term, citywide issues did not decrease. Many attributed this to the mixed system because it preserved some citywide focus by allowing for two at-large positions on the council and the at-large election of the mayor. The increased attention to specific neighborhood and minority interests serves to create a balance between citywide and district issues. Because district representatives are directly responsible for their particular areas of the city, sensitivity to specific locational problems, such as traffic problems, weeds, signs, neighborhood concerns, has increased. One example of the new balance between citywide and district needs concerns the construction of major streets in east Dallas. To facilitate commuter traffic from northeast Dallas into the central city, the city planned to widen certain arteries through east Dallas. The east Dallas community opposed the proposed street widening projects and were able to stop the project, at least partly because of the council's increased responsiveness to neighborhood concerns. Yet, many of those interviewed felt that the district councilmembers were also concerned with citywide issues. For example, most councilmembers supported the citywide mass transportation plan proposed by the Dallas Area Rapid Transit Authority, but denied a high density zoning request in a northeast Dallas neighborhood near a proposed transit stop.

Those who felt that the emphasis changed to neighborhood issues rather than city issues said that the issues addressed by the city council are more parochial and regional as a result of the single member districts. Some felt that as a result of the change, the councilmembers were, on the whole, more political than before. Whereas before the change to a mixed

system businessmen ran for city council with the express purpose of guiding the growth of the city of Dallas, current councilmembers' priorities are to get reelected or to move to a higher elected office and thus they address district issues in order to get reelected.

Basically, the distribution of power within the city government structure -- council, mayor, boards and commissions, city manager -- has not changed. The council and manager were powerful in the past and remain so. Some felt the city manager's job is more difficult now because he must deal with a more diverse group of councilmembers, which to some indicated a loss in effectiveness.

The extent to which service delivery was affected is difficult to determine. The majority of interviewees said delivery of services is more equitable now because district members actively try to improve and expand services for their districts. Service delivery is not considered equitable even now; however, some of this uneveness in service distribution is caused in part by rapid growth in north Dallas. Substantially more capital improvements are targeted for that high growth area. However, a significant minority of those interviewed said distribution of services were equitable before the change and remain so.

The change to a mixed system substantially influenced the council in terms of how councilmembers, particularly district representatives, view their role, and what types of issues are addressed. Councilmembers interviewed felt the role of district councilmember was different from the at-large representatives'. District representatives, they said, take a stronger advocacy role than did councilmembers in the at-large system. District councilmembers are more attuned to individual problems and consider themselves primarily responsible for their district rather than

the city. Contact with constituents increased with the change to a mixed system. One past single member district representative said he received at least 25 calls per day, seven days a week. All the councilmembers said that their constituents are most interested in issues that affect their own neighborhoods or that affect them personally. The district councilmembers said district issues take most of their time. For example, a north Dallas councilmember pointed to zoning and transportation as district issues that occupy much of his time.

The major changed perceived by city staff interviewed was the amount and kind of work generated by the council for city staff. The amount of constituent contact, through town hall meetings and telephone calls, has increased substantially.

Although at-large representatives are perceived by councilmembers to have more independence than the district representatives in terms of answering to constituency, no "bicameral" system exists in the Dallas mixed system. Each councilmember has the same amount of decisionmaking power because each representative has only one vote.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Most of those interviewed perceived some increase in citizen participation in campaigns, but not in voter turn out. In fact, voter turn out was not affected by the change. Voter turn out data from elections held between 1971 and 1983 show that turn out in elections before and after the change ranged from 12.8 percent to 24.8 percent of the registered voters. The increase in campaign participation was attributed to increased neighborhood activism, better organized neighborhood groups and more labor-intensive, as opposed to media-intensive, campaigns. Many also said

that the feeling that one could elect a representative who can be influenced has increased participation in campaigns. Some of the minorities interviewed said more Mexican-Americans and blacks vote since the change to a mixed system.

Another form of citizen participation is involvement in the city government process itself. As noted previously, neighborhood groups have grown in number as well as influence since the change to district representation. These and other groups actively attempt to influence the city government decisions through their district representatives. One district councilmember facilitates interaction between city government and her constituents by conducting a townhall meeting in her district the night before weekly council meetings. During the meeting, she goes over the agenda for the next day's council meeting, and encourages her constituents to air their concerns either through her or by speaking at the city council meeting.

CAMPAIGN STYLES

Campaign styles changed significantly with the advent of the mixed system, according to the majority of those interviewed. Most felt that the number of candidates has increased, that the number of individual contributions to campaigns increased and that the amount of money needed for district races decreased since the change. Use of media in district races is virtually nonexistent, but in the three at-large races it is used heavily.

Overall, the majority felt that the return to grass roots style of campaigning has influenced heavily the cost of running and therefore the number of candidates running. Data shows that district candidates do spend

less money on races. In the 1973 city council election, the last election in which all candidates ran at-large, the amount winning candidates spent ranged from a low of $131.00 to a high of $77,787.96. In 1983, the amount that winning district candidates spent ranged from a low of $6,192 to a high of $57,055.53, while the two winning at-large candidates spent $148,619 and $163,831.28. The cost of the mayoral race has increased significantly between 1973 and 1983. In 1973 the winning candidate spent only $12,233.92 ; in 1983 the winner spent $951,690. The huge amount spent in the 1983 election was the result of a hotly contested race between a flamboyant ex-mayor, Wes Wise, and a lesser known north Dallas businessman and eventual winner, Starke Taylor. Whether this indicates a new trend in campaign spending by mayoral candidates cannot be surmised.

CONCLUSIONS

Response to the mixed system in Dallas appears to be positive. Proponents in the white community and in the business community feel that the mixed system provides for racial and geographical representation through district representation and also provides for a citywide perspective through at-large councilmembers. The north Dallas business community, in particular, feels that single-member districts have strengthened, not weakened, city government in Dallas. In fact, that group has gained influence in city government with the weakening of the CCA, which was controlled by downtown business. Minorities feel that the addition of eight single member districts to Dallas was a step in the right direction toward equitable representation. However, they also feel that the change to the mixed system has given the minority community only a voice, not equal representation. Through the change from an at-large

system to a mixed system, the city has sidestepped the legal challenges by minority community members that may confront at-large systems. Yet, north Dallas, which is largely white, has retained its control in the council because the two at-large members and the mayor consistently come from three north districts, districts three, four and five. This means that the those districts are represented by six councilmembers, three district representatives, two at-large representatives, and the mayor. Some feel that if this situation continues, the mixed system will be challenged. During the 1983 election, the minorities formed a "black-brown" coalition to work toward getting a black or Mexican-American in an at-large position, but their candidate lost. This coalition is especially important to the Mexican-American community because they have no district representative.

Part of the problem in minority representation may be that councilmembers are paid only $50 per meeting, which can be a barrier to many in the minority and low income segments of the population.

Overall, the city government, particularly the city council, seems to be more responsive and accessible to minority and neighborhood groups. What actually gets done for those groups, however, is not clear. These groups may have gained influence in city government relative to what they had before, but the old power structure is very much alive. The business community no longer controls all seats, but they retained much of their power. In general, the three at-large places and three north Dallas districts represent the business interests in Dallas.

An important caution to the findings of this report is that many of the changes cited were not necessarily caused solely by the change in the electoral system. Single-member districts did facilitate many of the mentioned changes, but the causal relationship is more complex. Changing

needs, demographic factors and social values, as well as growth in Dallas, affect the way the city is run.

CHAPTER SIX - CHARLOTTE

By Therese Brown and Robert B. Stewart

BACKGROUND

Charlotte, North Carolina, a prospering sunbelt city of over 320,000, exhibits many similarities to Austin, thus facilitating a comparison of these cities' electoral systems. Charlotte's and Austin's populations are nearly equivalent and the percentage of minority groups is similar. Austin's minority population includes nineteen percent Mexican-Americans and twelve percent black (thirty-one percent total), while Charlotte's black community comprises thirty-one percent of the total population. Both cities are experiencing pangs of rapid growth with the ensuing problems of land use planning, and both are endeavoring to attract new industry and businesses. In addition, both are viewed as being progressive, socially and economically, as well as politically.

The history of Charlotte city government mirrors that of many other southern cities. Ward representatives governed the city from 1851 through 1917 followed by a twelve year experiment with a three member commission plan. In 1929, Charlotte adopted the council-manager form of government with a five member at-large council. This at-large system lasted only until 1935 when ward representation was again adopted. Because a black political leader almost won a council seat in 1945 (no black had ever served on the council), the council quickly changed its electoral system to a seven-member at-large plan which remained until 1977.

The move to district representation was not prompted by any actual or threatened federal intervention. Rather, low and middle income westside neighborhood groups began to organize in the mid-70s due to a perceived

lack of responsiveness from a city council dominated by affluent businessmen, all of whom lived in the southeast section of the city. The black community joined with the white neighborhood groups to protest the lack of geographic and minority representation on the council and on city boards and commissions. Moreover, these groups objected to the location of a disproportionate share of undesirable public facilities -- such as expressways, waste dumps, sewage treatment plants and the airport -- on the west side of town. Neglect in the provision of many basic services -- such as street maintenance, drainage, and park acquisition -- and a questionable policy for scattered-site public housing projects that exempted the high income areas of the city were also cited as prime motivators for a district plan. In general, both groups were tired of a basic lack of responsiveness to neighborhood needs.

Although all elected councilmembers in 1975 favored some form of district representation, they made little progress toward that objective, hampered in part by a mayoral veto on a plan to study the issue. Faced with council intransigence, neighborhood groups successfully petitioned for a public referendum on the issue. The referendum passed in April, 1977, by a mere eighty votes and set up the present system of seven district and four at-large councilmembers and mayor. (North Carolina state law limits city councils to twelve members.) Presently councilmembers are paid a $6,000 salary with $4,000 per year for expenses, while the mayor receives a $12,000 salary and $5,200 for expenses.

Today Charlotte is governed by a council-manager form of government with a twelve-member council (including the mayor) elected on a partisan basis. Although the mayor is considered part of the council, he votes only in case of a tie. The passage of any motion, resolution or ordinance

requires six affirmative votes of the coucilmembers or five such affirmative votes together with the affirmative vote of the mayor. With the exception of certain council appointments, internal affairs, and matters which must be approved by the voters, the mayor may veto any action adopted by the council. Any action so vetoed is placed automatically on the next session's agenda but is not readopted unless its veto is overridden by at least seven councilmembers' votes.

This paper examines the change from an at-large system to a mixed system of electing city councilmembers. A total of thirty-four interviews with present and former elected and appointed officials, with business, neighborhood and minority leaders, and with journalists and academics were conducted. In addition, a thorough examination was made of previous studies concerning Charlotte's local government electoral system. Every effort was made to solicit the viewpoints of all segments of the community. The results obtained and the conclusions drawn focus on changes in representativeness, impact on decisionmaking, citizen participation and campaign styles.

REPRESENTATIVENESS

The vast majority of quantitative and qualitative data indicates that the mixed system in Charlotte has led to a more representative city government which is increasingly responsive and accessible to its citizens. Under the old plan, only one black served at any one time and then only beginning in 1965. Under the new plan, two districts have consistently elected black representatives. In addition, one black has served as an at-large councilmember from 1977-79 and again from 1981-83. Notably, this at-large representative, Harvey Gantt, was elected Charlotte's first black

mayor in November 1983. Geographically, each section of the city now has its own district representative and even the at-large seats are not totally controlled by the affluent white section of the populace. Both the black and white communities admit to single- or double-shot voting in the at-large races. This practice, particularly because it is engaged in by the majority white population, has led to charges of discrimination against black candidates.[5] Although the elections in November 1983 elevated Harvey Gantt to the position of mayor, neither of the two black candidates for at-large council seats were successful, finishing sixth and seventh in a field of eight candidates. While the election returns indicate significantly polarized voting patterns in the at-large races, the two black losing candidates were satisfied with their showings and indicated a desire to seek greater white support in future elections. Even with other indications of polarized voting the election of Harvey Gantt as an at-large councilmember and subsequently as mayor seems to counter the argument that voting patterns in Charlotte are strictly polarized. In any case, no one has suggested instituting requirements against single- or double-shot voting.

A change in the makeup of city boards and commissions has been evident since 1977. It must first be noted that a significant number of boards are joint city/county organizations with the county commissioners (who are elected at-large) making half the appointments. Prior to 1977, virtually all boards and commission members were white businessmen from southeast Charlotte. By 1983, although Districts Six and Seven (southeast Charlotte)

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[5]Bernard Grofman, The Disadvantageous Effects of At-Large Elections Of the Success of Minority Candidates for the Charlotte and Raleigh City Councils, May 20, 1983, University of California at Irvine.

still produced a majority of the appointees, a trend toward greater geographical and racial representation had emerged. In 1980, the Charter Revision Committee recommended the adoption of a "fair representation" provision in the City Charter. This provision became part of the Charter as a principle to guide council appointments, not as a strict requirement. Most feel that with district representation, more qualified citizens are being considered for these appointments. The district representatives know who is interested and qualified to serve on these boards and make a point to nominate their constituents. However at-large councilmembers input remains part of the appointment process since nominations come from all councilmembers and appointments are by consensus. In any case, the change has not only led to more representative boards, it has also fostered a more positive image of these organizations. For instance, the Hospital Authority began to decentralize medical facilities away from southeast Charlotte, the Housing Authority scattered the location of low income housing projects and for the first time placed public housing in southeast Charlotte, the Park Advisory Committee began to recommend more park acquisition on the west side, and the Planning Commission began to consider carefully the effects of growth on individual neighborhoods. Overall, the people feel that it is district representation that has made boards and commissions more representative and responsive to the needs of the people.

IMPACT ON DECISIONMAKING

Since the advent of district representation a more diverse group of people participate in the decisionmaking process. More blacks and women serve on the city council and on city boards and commissions. Consequently, a more diverse group of interests are represented and the

decisionmaking reflects this diversity. Business interests, perceived by some as overly influential at city hall prior to 1977, must lobby more intensely to influence council decisions. District representation formalized the grass roots efforts of neighborhood organizations to influence the city council and neighborhood activists are now able to gain some of their points.

For example, an increased number of zoning rollbacks has occurred since the change to district representation. Council decisions reflect a greater sensitivity to neighborhood and other interests previously underrepresented in the decisionmaking process. The results of issues decided by the voters have also changed. Since 1977, a greater number of bond packages has been passed by the voters. Although a small percentage of those interviewed disputed any correlation between passage of bonds and district representation, there exists a general perception that voters now place more trust in city government and therefore are more willing to believe that bond packages put on the ballot are indeed beneficial to the entire city.

One example frequently cited was the successful passage of airport improvement bonds in 1978. The airport bonds had been voted down twice due to the opposition of west Charlotte voters who resided near the airport. The councilmember representing the predominantly black district where the airport was located organized airport tours for people in nearby neighborhoods and showed them the need for improvements. In addition, this councilmember and other black leaders bargained to gain certain concessions for blacks. A percentage of the construction work was to go to black contractors and ownership of some of the new concession stands was to go to blacks. An active effort to hire more blacks at the airport was to be

made.

The success of the bargaining process and the effort to involve people from nearby neighborhoods in the issue convinced westside voters to vote for the bonds which then were approved.

There was a general consensus among those interviewed that the efforts made by the district councilmembers were instrumental in insuring passage of the bonds. It was said that the bargaining process would never have occurred under the at-large system. With a district representative to voice their concerns, westside voters now had power to insure that their needs were addressed. Many blacks remarked that although they could not change the fact that the airport, an unpleasant facility to have as a neighbor, was on their side of town, at least they would be able, finally, to gain something from it.

Prior to the 1977 change to a combination system, many people voiced a fear that district representatives would be parochial in their decisionmaking and cause the city as a whole to suffer. This fear has proven to be unfounded in Charlotte. Everyone interviewed, including those opposed to district representation, said that this phenomena has not occurred. District representatives are thought to be balanced in their decisionmaking.

One phenomenon that has occurred is longer council sessions. With a larger council and more diverse interests represented, meetings run much longer than before. Serving on the city council in Charlotte is a part-time job and the longer hours are viewed by some past and present councilmembers as a great drain on their personal resources. Other councilmembers do not seem to mind the longer hours because, although it is more time consuming, the decisionmaking process is more open and

democratic. Previously underrepresented citizens remarked that longer meetings reflected the fact that decisions are no longer made in the back room by a select few.

After the change to district representation, there was said to be substantial confusion over the role of the city council in city government. Past at-large councilmembers and city administrators commented that the new council, which included many new faces, did not know the difference between policy making and administrative decisions. Extra demands were placed on city staff which necessitated an increase in personnel. Although this confusion has subsided somewhat as councilmembers become more familiar with their jobs, there are those who feel there is still a problem in this area.

Another area of concern that was addressed was service delivery. The effects of the election change on the service delivery in Charlotte is in part a matter of perception. Some businessmen and former appointed and elected city officials are adamant that services such as street improvements, drainage, garbage collection, police a fire protection, etc., have always been equally distributed. On the other hand, many neighborhood and minority leaders feel that services had been directed to one part of town while neglecting other parts. The truth lies somewhere between these two extremes. There is no doubt that with district representation service delivery is scrutinized more closely. As noted previously, this sometimes leads to council involvement in the functions of the city manager. Most people feel better in having an identifiable councilmembers they can call if a problem exists concerning the provision of city services. This has lead to an increase in the district councilmembers' workload as the at-large councilmembers get few of these type calls.

All in all, there does not appear to have been any purposeful attempt

to discriminate in service delivery. Rather, under the old system, city councilmembers, department heads, and most board members tended to live on the same side of town and were unaware of the problems in other sections of Charlotte. By having district representatives who live in different parts of the city, these problems are more identifiable.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

As alluded to previously, the role and influence of the neighborhood groups has increased substantially. However, this has not necessarily occurred at the expense of the business community. Business and development interests still exercise influence over most at-large councilmembers and some district councilmembers. The change may be best characterized as having produced a sharing of the power or at least as having created a situation where all sides can be presented prior to decisions being made. Most businessmen feel that their influence is not excessive and that only through business expansion can new jobs be created so the city will continue to prosper. The real battle lines are drawn between the developers and the neighborhood groups. This conflict has centered around the Planning Commission but is quite evident in the city council as well. Again, the one notable effect of the election change has been that neighborhood groups are able to present their arguments before cognizant boards and commissions and the city council and are assured that most decisions are made in the open and have not been predetermined.

The move to the combination plan did cause an initial, marked increase in voter participation in 1977 after having steadily declined for several years. This heightened interest did not carry through to the next two elections. Black registration figures have been gradually increasing

although approximately 50 percent of eligible to vote are still are not registered. This has produced large differences in the number of registered voters between the various districts. The institution of districts in and of themselves cannot be said to have increased voter participation. Rather, the intensity of the particular race, the issue and the personalities involved determine voter turn out.

One interesting phenomena that has occurred in voting patterns since 1977 is that in both district and at-large races, an incumbent has never been defeated. Changes occur only when a councilmember retires or seeks another position. This is not due to incumbents going unchallenged since most elections have been contested including a few well financed attempts to unseat the incumbent. This may be partially explained by a majority of the people perceiving that an extremely well qualified group of individuals were elected in 1977 who have continually been able to meet the demands of their constituents. Dilution of black voting strength due to the adjustment of district lines after the annexation of predominantly white suburbs may present future challenges but are unlikely at present time. Because so many different variables can contribute to voter turnout and voting patterns, it is wise to look at other forms of citizen participation that are equally as important as voter participation when studying a change from at-large systems to district representation systems. Most people interviewed generally agreed that there has been an increased interest on the part of the citizens in city council activities and in the recommendations and rules formulated by various boards and commissions. The various neighborhood groups are well organized and have clout. One black district councilmember holds regular public meetings within his district which has generated strong public support. All districts had

similar forums set up initially but several died due to a lack of citizen interest. As is the case in many other cities, people organize only at times of perceived crisis. However, people feel that through district representation the mechanism exists and is available for them to air their views. The consensus is that everyone now has equal access and opportunity to make their ideas known.

CAMPAIGN STYLES

Campaign styles in Charlotte vary considerably from those in Austin in one important aspect: candidates in Charlotte spend considerably less money than do candidates in Austin.

A study conducted at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte found that the mean amount spent from 1975-1980 by at-large candidates was $7,590., while district candidates spent a mean amount of $5,155. Mayoral candidates spent a mean amount of $51,644.

In 1981, the most recent year from which figures are available, the highest amount spent by winning at-large candidate (an incumbent) was $20,369.52. The lowest amount spent by a winning at-large candidate (an incumbent) was $7,013.77. The highest amount spent by a losing at-large candidate (a non-incumbent) was $11,496.10.

The highest amount spent in 1981 by a winning district candidate (an incumbent) was $8,716.78 and the lowest amount spent by a winning district candidate (an incumbent) was $2,776.37. The highest amount spent by a losing district candidate was $7,646.23; this candidate ran against an incumbent who only spent $2,913.73.[6]

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[6]Ted Arrington, A Study of Local Election Trends, 1981, University of North Carolina of Charlotte.

In 1979, two district incumbents were outspent 4 to 1 and 3 to 1 in hotly contested races yet both won reelection by comfortable margins.

These figures highlight an important pattern in Charlotte; the power of incumbency is by far a more important factor in winning both at-large and district elections than is the amount of money spent. It can also be concluded that district races are generally less expensive than are the at-large races.

The UNCC study also pointed out that the greatest number of contributors and the greatest amount of money contributed continues to come from the affluent section of town as it did before the change to district representation.[7]

Since Charlotte candidates spend less money, they use less mass media. The use of yard signs is the most prevalent advertising used by all candidates. At-large and mayoral candidates make much use of billboards and target any T.V. and radio money for the last week of the campaign. District candidates do not spend much money on media but walk door to door in their districts in an effort to persuade voters.

Unlike Austin, Charlotte's city election are partisan. There seemed to be a general consensus that indentifying candidates as Democratic or Republican had the main effect of labeling candidates as either liberal or a conservative to the voters.

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[7]Ibid.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS OF COMBINATION SYSTEMS

In studying district representation, there are some frequently voiced concerns about conditions that may occur in cities with combination systems. One concern not addressed in previous pages is that a combination system promotes a bicameral situation where at-large members exert more influence than district members over council matters. This has not happened in Charlotte. Leadership on the council is a matter of personalities. Another concern is that at-large councilmembers will be pitted against the district representatives in the form of a voting bloc. This also has not been the case in Charlotte.

CONCLUSIONS

The change from an at-large to a mixed system of electing city councilmembers in Charlotte has been received favorably by a majority of those interviewed for this report. Geographical and racial representation on the council and municipal boards and commissions has increased. The decision-making process is viewed now as being more open and flexible, allowing for all community interests to be aired and considered by the city council. Although many believe service delivery was equitable before the change, no doubt now remains that service delivery is equitable and that city operated facilities are being distributed throughout Charlotte. As in most cities citizen participation depends largely upon the issues involved. Black voter registration has been steadily increasing and there has been an overall increase in voter participation in recent elections. Finally, an examination of campaign expense records reveals that at-large candidates usually spend at least twice as much as those running for district positions. In the last twenty years Charlotte has been known as a city

that deals with community issues in an equitable manner and the successful change to a mixed system further verifies this attitude.

CHAPTER SEVEN - CORPUS CHRISTI

By Gloria Moreno and Willie Pruitt

BACKGROUND

Corpus Christi is the sixth largest city in Texas. Located on the Gulf Coast, its economy is closely linked to the petrochemical industry, manufacturing, agriculture, and to an increasing degree, tourism. Corpus Christi is also a major seaport.

According to the 1980 Census, the median income for the city is $16,564. Whites have the highest median income with $17,361, followed by Mexican-Americans with $13,445 and blacks with $10,794.

Corpus Christi's growth rate could be considered moderate. From 1970 to 1980, the population grew from 204,525 to 231,999 or 13 percent. During that period, there was a slight shift in the proportion of whites and Mexican-Americans in the city's population. Whites decreased from 53.1 percent of the population in 1970 to 47.4 percent of the population in 1980, while the proportion of Mexican-Americans in the population increased from 40.6 to 46.4 percent between 1970 and 1980. The proportion of Blacks in the population has remained approximately 5.1 percent. These changes in the city's population, based on census and City Planning Commision data, are detailed below:

Year	Total Population	% White	% Mexican American	% Black
1970	204,525	53.1	40.6	5.1
1973	213,874	51.5	42.4	5.1
1977	221,053	49.1	44.8	5.1
1980	231,999	47.4	46.4	5.1

Corpus Christi is considered as a control city, therefore, although

the city changed to single-member districts in August, 1983, we are primarily concerned with the city's experiences under the at-large electoral system. From 1970 until 1983 the city council was composed of a mayor and six councilmembers elected at-large for a term of two years. Candidates for places 1 through 4 resided in specific councilmanic districts corresponding to those place numbers. Councilmembers and the mayor were paid $100 for each oficial meeting attended, with a $6,000 per year maximum, and the mayor was allowed an additional $3,000 per year for expenses.

The method of electing councilmembers was successfully challenged by a group of Mexican-Americans in Alonzo v. Jones. In August 1983 the first elections were held under a modified system. The mayor and three councilmembers are now elected at-large and five members of the council are elected from single-member districts. At-large councilmembers are elected with a plurality vote while district councilmembers are elected by majority vote.

As previously stated, this study examines the experiences of Corpus Christi under the at-large system of election. For the purpose of this study, the council elections of 1973 and 1977 are considered most closely. The 1973 election was selected due to a relatively low voter turnout, while 1977 was chosen because of a relatively high turnout.

While the research of others has been primarily quantitative in nature, this report addresses the city's experiences from a qualitative viewpoint. The perceptions of thirty-seven current and former city councilmembers, city staff, business and community leaders, academics, and journalists form the basis of this analysis. The questions posed, and the subsequent analysis focus on representativeness, impact on decisionmaking,

citizen participation, and campaign styles.

REPRESENTATIVENESS

Clearly, business and development interests were most heavily represented within the city government under the at-large system, however, these interests were neither monolithic in power nor homogeneous in nature. There were differences within this group on what should be the type and location of development. The most visible manifestions of these interests were the Business Development Commission and the Chamber of Commerce, both almost exclusively white, male, and middle to upper income. Their ability to raise issues and elicit action was unparalleled.

The interests of the Mexican-American community ran a distant second while blacks, labor, environmentalists, neighborhood associations, and women's groups had even less influence.

Perceptions of how equitable geographical and racial interests were represented on the city council and within boards and commissions under the at-large system varied greatly, depending upon residence and race. Whites were just as likely to consider representation equal as they were to consider it unequal. Many stated that Mexican-American interests were represented during the years that there was no Mexican-American elected to the city council, but conceded that such representation was not as effective as it could have been. Some of the whites felt that the pool of qualified minorities from which to choose for appointments to boards and commissions was not large enough. Most whites agreed that it would be a good system if everyone participated equally and that the council continually strived for fair representation on boards and commissions.

Yet, these attempts at fairness did not yield results acceptable to

either the Mexican-American or blacks who viewed the extent of their influence differently from whites, citing "presence without representation" on the council as well as on important boards and commissions. Many felt that although minorities were elected to the council, they were chosen, financed, and supported by the business and development community, which made them less than representative of minority concerns.

In general, whites agreed that minorities had less confidence in the at-large system and perceived it as less fair. Specifically, Mexican-Americans tended to view the council as inaccessible, indifferent, and unresponsive to their interests. Blacks considered the council accessible and somewhat responsive. This is related to the fact that blacks are considered as the swing vote in many local elections.

Frustration with the lack of geographical representaion prompted many neighborhoods throughout the city to coalesce into associations. For example, the Pharaoh Valley Neighborhood Association was formed in response to dissatisfaction with the location of a waste water treatment plant and an escalating burglary rate. This underscored the fact that concern for representaion was not simply divided along racial lines.

Whites generally agreed that the council was both effective and efficient, perhaps because of the council's homogeneous composition and attitude. Goals were set and attained, especially in recent councils. For example, one former councilman noted that of the thirty-three goals set for the term beginning in 1981, thirty-one were accomplished. These goals related primarily to growth, capital improvement, and services.

The primary area of contention between whites and minorities, however, was equality of representation. In the eyes of most Mexican-Americans the at-large system could not be considered as effective in representativeness

or responsiveness if it was not representative of and responsive to the entire community.

IMPACT ON DECISIONMAKING

Under the at-large system, the major areas addressed by city government seemed to be economic development and capital improvements. Emphasis was placed on bayfront development; tourist attractions; port modernization; convention center, library, and city hall planning and construction; land mass creation; and industrialization in general. Mexican-Americans perceived a bias toward predominantly white, middle to upper income area improvement, particularly such areas as North Beach, Ocean Drive, and Southside. In sum, long-term, citywide concerns such as development and employment were effectively addressed but there was concern in the minority community about distribution.

It is a generally held belief in Corpus Christi that under the at-large system boards and commissions advised the council on areas of concern, the city council made policy decisions, the city manager and staff implemented those decisions, and the mayor presided over the council as the decisions were made. Many cited the city manager's ability to influence council decisions by force of personality, expertise, and information rather than position alone. In addition, several boards and commissions were noted as especially powerful, such as the Business Development Commission and the Planning Commission. Several respondents perceived that those commission recommendations were often "rubber-stamped" by the council. Whites and blacks were evenly split on whether the distribution of services and facilities were equitable under the at-large system. While a number of whites felt that more money was spent in less affluent areas,

most Mexican-Americans considered distribution equitable, but they joined blacks in expressing concern over the use of federal (Community Development Black Grant) versus local funds for infrastructure improvements. Thus, it was perceived by the Mexican-American community that the city was not genuinely concerned with equitable distribution in their neighborhoods.

Councilmembers did not view their roles parochially, seeming to prefer an overall view of the city under the at-large system. They estimated that an average of approximately twenty calls per week came from constituents and that most of those constituents were interested in issues affecting the city as a whole first, individual issues second, and neighborhood issues third. There was general agreement that conflict within the council was nominal and that there were no discernible consistent alignments. Only one felt that alignments prevailed, and that was the power structure versus labor and minorities. Business, development, and zoning issues were believed by most councilmembers to take up most of their time.

Finally, under the at-large system, the city manager and staff consistently attempted to use resources effectively and efficiently. While there was cooperation and a good rapport established with council, the manager had less of a relationship with individual councilmembers. The generation of work was based on need as perceived by the city manager with little input from individual councilmembers.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

The at-large system of election saw relatively low voter turnout, especially in the Mexican-American community. Presumably, this was most closely related to the perceived inability to elect or to affect the election of a candidate of their own choosing. Citizen apathy also resulted in low participation in campaigns. Neighborhood associations were almost unheard of until 1981.

CAMPAIGN STYLES

Under the at-large system of election, money was most often the determining factor in an election. Candidates relied heavily on advertising agencies and mass media campaigns rather than personal contact or phone banks. Until 1979, slating by business interests effectively controlled elections, almost excluding independent non-establishment candidates. Most financing came from developers, real estate brokers, builders, financial institutions, and other business as well as development interests. Relatively little money came from small individual contributors.

Successful Mexican-American candidates who appeared on slates were not normally supported by the Mexican-American community. While most agreed that no consistently effective coalitions existed, many alluded to a conservative white-black coalition. The importance of blacks as a swing vote was underscored. This position allowed blacks some leverage in making concerns known to local elected officials, regardless of race.

CONCLUSIONS

1. In general, whites tended to be satisfied with the

effectiveness, efficiency, responsiveness, and representativeness of the at-large system, but expressed concern about the perception of unfairness by the minority community.

2. In general, blacks tended to be satisfied with the effectiveness and efficiency of the at-large system, but only marginally satisfied with responsiveness and representativeness.

3. In general, Mexican-Americans tended to be dissatisfied with the effectiveness, responsiveness, and representativeness of the at-large system. The perceived inability to elect councilmembers of their own choosing and hold them accountable once elected was the source of frustration which led to the court case.

CHAPTER EIGHT - PHOENIX

By Jim Gatz and Preston Lee

BACKGROUND

Phoenix, Arizona's capital, is described as the "prototype Sun Belt city." Set in a desert valley, it is known for agreeable weather and a pro-business attitude. The commercial and government center of Arizona, Phoenix's three major employment classifications are wholesale and retail trade, services, and government. The ninth most populous city in the United States, it is one of the fastest growing areas in the nation. Its 1970 population was 584,303; by 1982 this figure had grown to 836,000--a 43 percent increase. Its geographic area has also grown substantially. In 1970, Phoenix comprised 247.9 square miles while in 1982 it had a total area of 330.8 square miles. The city's ethnic make-up has been relatively constant during the past two decades with approximately 78 percent white, 15 percent Mexican-American, 5 percent black, and 2 percent "other" which includes a substantial native American population.

At the same time that Phoenix is a modern and growing city, its government has the reputation for being well managed and highly professional. The city's ability to deal with issues caused by rapid growth reflects favorably on the effectiveness and quality of its system. Its infrastructure has met the demands of an increased population and city staff has kept up with an increased workload. Staff efficiency is evident by the staggering amount of private development allowed in the city; Phoenix was only one of four cities in the nation issuing more than 10,000 new building permits in 1981. With a bond rating among the best in the country, its fiscal state is enviable. Phoenix seems to be a well-run

city.

At-large city council elections have played a large part in Phoenix history. Phoenix city councilmembers were elected at-large for seventy years beginning in 1913. In 1950 a City Charter revision established a council- manager form of government with a mayor and six councilmembers elected to serve two year terms. The City Charter revision was meant to establish an efficient, business-like city government with a manager free of political pressures and a mayor and council with a citywide view. City offices are officially only part-time positions, although in reality they often demand close to full time attention. Before January 1984, the mayor was paid $25,000 and councilpersons were paid $12,000 per year.

Beginning in 1950, the Charter Government Committee (C.G.C.), the bipartisan citizens' committee which proposed the charter revisions, began to draft individuals to run for city office. It supported slates which often included at least one minority and one woman candidate. This group effectively dominated city elections for twenty-five years.

In 1975, Phoenix elected a mayor and four councilmembers who were not supported by the C.G.C. This signaled the demise of C.G.C. power. The 1975 election was pivital for several reasons. This election was the first in the city in which ballots were printed in Spanish as well as English. Also, several hotly debated referenda were on the ballot -- among them were votes on a highway construction project, a proposition to give the mayor veto powers, and a proposition to create a single-member district electoral system. Another unusual factor was that there was a large field of candidates: eight running for mayor and twenty-six for council. With only two of its seven slated candidates elected, C.G.C. lost much of its influence. Yet, many Phoenicians believe that a few powerful groups still

have much influence in city elections.

Phoenix is one of two "control" cities in this study. It is representative of cities with a council elected at-large. However, in November 1982, Phoenix voted to elect councilpersons from eight single member districts. The first election under this Charter revision was held on November 1, 1983; those elected took office in January 1984. Nonetheless, for the purposes of this study, we focus on Phoenix's experiences with its at-large council.

To determine how Phoenix's at-large council electoral system functioned, we sought opinions of thirty-six Phoenicians. These included present and former councilpersons, a former mayor, business and community leaders, neighborhood organizers, journalists, and academics. In the interviews we sought opinions on what effect, if any, the at-large electoral system had on four aspects of local government: the council's representativeness of the community as a whole; the council's decisionmaking abilities; citizen participation; and, council election campaign styles.

REPRESENTATIVENESS

In the survey, all respondents said that the Charter Government Committee was certainly the most influential group in Phoenix politics before 1975. Since 1975, there has not been any one single influential group. Rather several groups are perceived as powerful forces in the city. Those frequently mentioned were the Chamber of Commerce, the daily newspaper, local banks, and a group of businessmen known as the "Phoenix 40." Ironically, many individuals who were once involved in the C.G.C. are also involved in these "new" power centers. Thus, interviewees felt that

many of the same people and business institutions have been powerful in Phoenix for many years.

Perceptions differed regarding the extent of minority and special interest representation in Phoenix government. Several mentioned that the Charter Government Committee regularly included Mexican-Americans, blacks, and women in its slates of candidates. Others, while acknowledging this fact, questioned whether these candidates were actually representative of minority groups. Instead they felt that these councilpersons did not understand or attempt to represent the special interests of groups sharing their minority status. They argued that the individuals chosen by the C.G.C. were not sensitive to the needs of the minority community, and that while the C.G.C. could say its slate included minority candidates, those candidates in fact were not representative of the minority community. One minority councilperson originally backed by the Charter Government Committee has consciously attempted to represent the needs of the minority community. However, respondents felt that other minority councilmembers did not see a special need to represent the minority viewpoint.

In summary, most respondents felt that Phoenix government has not always been representative of all groups in the city. They perceived that this was not due to the at-large electoral system, but rather to C.G.C. candidate slating.

IMPACT ON DECISIONMAKING

Most respondents stated that there were two principal issues addressed by the city in recent years: transportation, and urban planning and development. Many interviewees felt that the city government has been effective in managing the city's transportation problems because Phoenix

has grown phenomenally, yet traffic movement is considered to be fairly efficient. However, other respondents felt that although Phoenix has allocated much time and money to transportation, problems still exist, especially in low-income and minority areas of the city. The city's fast growth has made urban planning a major issue as well. Several interviewees complained that the city does not effectively scrutinize private development plans. They pointed to numerous zoning variances which allow construction of high-rise buildings and high-density complexes. These variances ignore comprehensive city zoning strategies.

At least one-third of those interviewed, all of whom were non-minorities, stated that Phoenix has not experienced many major citywide problems. They felt that government had been fair and efficient. Several of these people, though, stated that transportation and urban development had recently become major problems. At the same time, many minority interviewees stated that the city had been experiencing numerous problems for several years. They pointed to poor streets in low income areas of the city, few bridges crossing the Salt River from the southern region -- the low income area -- to the downtown area, and few city hospital facilities in less affluent portions of the city.

Generally, in our survey, respondents who were members of minority organizations, labor unions, or citizens groups, stated that although the formal power structure consisted of the mayor, city council, and the city manager, the informal power structure consisted of business interests who were responsible for much of the development in the city. These respondents said that Phoenix politics and decisionmaking was dominated by this informal structure. Other respondents acknowledged only the formal hierarchy of government. "Everyone plays a part in politics and no one has

any more influence then anyone else," was the sentiment echoed by a Chamber of Commerce staff person.

Another branch of the power structure in Phoenix, that is, the city Boards and Commissions, fits between the formal and informal power structures. However, several interviewees questioned the real impact of these council appointed bodies. The general perception is that most boards and commissions have only minimal power. The few powerful boards have always been manned by special interests. While the members of the less powerful boards and commissions are more representative of the city as a whole, their weakness allows them only minor impact on city policy.

Several interviewees stated that because the city staff works for the city manager, it sometimes presents one-sided information to the council. Councilmembers have only a few staff members and therefore they must rely on city departments for advice and information. The council then sets policy based on this information. For this reason, the city manager is perceived by several to have more power then either the mayor or the city council.

Those who felt that services and facilities were distributed equally over all geographic areas pointed to the city's capital improvement budgets as evidence to support their claim. Several asserted that, in fact, the city had targeted more resources in the low income areas than in other areas. Others argued that operating expenditures going to low income and minority areas of the city were much less than those spent in higher income areas. Thus, they claimed that while capital expenditures may be distributed equally, minority areas receive only a portion of the total revenues that non-minority areas receive. Further, they felt that neither capital nor operating expenditures were distributed according to need.

Many respondents from minority groups, special interests, and labor unions, stated that facilities and city services have not been equitably distributed. Others stated that city services are adequately distributed throughout all portions of the city.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Citizens participate in local government in various ways. The percentage of the population who vote, the level of activity and citizen input during elections, and the amount and quality of citizen involvement daily help to define the level of citizen participation in any city government.

Phoenix voter participation has fluctuated widely in the past twenty years. Not including the 1965 election, an average of 37.43 percent of registered voters participated in primary elections, while 26.06 percent voted in general elections. Primary election turn-out ranged from 22.19 percent in 1973 to 58.22 percent in 1979, while general election participation ranged from 14.69 percent in 1973 to 38.18 percent in 1975. These figures are relatively high when compared with voter participation of other cities, yet, interviewees perceived these rates to be quite low.

Interviewees suggested several explanations for these voter participation rates. Many claimed that city government had been very efficient, and, thus, voters felt they had no reason to vote. On the other hand, several observed that the prevailing perception in Phoenix is that "you can't beat city hall," and, thus, voting would have no effect on how the city government operated. A recent poll concluded that 65 percent of Phoenix residents feel that "There is a cadre in back rooms pulling strings

in the city."[8] Interviewees felt that effective city management--as evidenced by relatively few city wide problems--combined with the disillusion citizens felt with their attempts to affect changes in cases of poor management, caused low voter participation rates.

Many people interviewed claimed that the C.G.C. had a large impact on citizen involvement in campaigns. These respondents asserted that C.G.C.'s domination effectively minimized citizen interest and input. Because its candidates were always elected, it seemed that other candidates had no chance of winning an election. Therefore, citizens remained relatively inactive during council campaigns.

Citizen activism outside of campaign activity is another indication of citizen participation. Phoenix is proud of its citizen participation. It was named an All American City in 1980 by the National Municipal League in recognition of its high level of citizen involvement. More than seven hundred individuals serve on boards and commissions.

Neighborhood and citizen organizations have not been prevalent in Phoenix. Many attributed this, in part, to the fact that Phoenix is growing quickly and therefore citizens have not identified with their neighborhoods. Groups focusing on single issues have been active in the past but these usually died once their issue was settled or once the groups tired of attempting to deal with the issue. Interviewees felt that citizen input was not seriously considered because city hall could not be swayed.

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[8]Jana Bommersbach, "The Humbling of Power," New Times(October 19-25, 1983): p.22.

CAMPAIGN STYLES

From 1950 until 1975, campaign strategies and styles were necessarily influenced by the slates put together by the C.G.C. The C.G.C. was strictly a candidate slating group, disbanding after every election and claiming to have no influence over candidates once they were in office. The committee worked within a strict framework. It solicited nominations from throughout the city, and some claim it attempted to draft a slate representative of all portions of the city -- ethnically as well as geographically. In an effort to insure that city officials did not become overly powerful, all C.G.C. backed candidates agreed to serve a maximum of two terms, and only one term if not re-endorsed by the committee. Further, the group refused to draft anyone who actively sought public office.

While Phoenix elections are non-partisan, C.G.C. candidates ran as a slate, and election returns indicate that they were elected as a slate. In every election from 1949 through 1969, all successful council and mayoral candidates were supported by the C.G.C. Two "opposition" candidates were elected between 1969 and 1975. The 1975 and 1977 elections were largely free of any obvious slating group control. Yet, some contended that by 1979 a small, informal group of businessmen again dominated city elections.

The C.G.C. ran every aspect of its candidates' campaigns. The committee hired a campaign manager and raised money to finance the campaigns. It defined the issues its candidates would stress, published pamphlets outlining its stand on these issues and organized forums where candidates presented its ideas. Campaign appearances were made as a group, and most advertisements included the entire slate. However, a few C.G.C. candidates did wage personal game plans in addition to the group effort.

In the face of this well organized and well financed slate,

independents candidates found it difficult to raise funds and issues. As an independent candidate complained in 1971, "This is sick when a responsible candidate can't get campaign funds and can't get speaking engagements...Whenever you have a system controlled by a machine so tight, you can't have responsible competition."[9] Another independent lamented that Charter Government Committee control meant a de facto "abolition of free elections." He continued, "Being an independent candidate is a very lonely position. I often wish I had not entered. I do not want to lend dignity to a farce."[10]

Prior to 1975, other groups also endorsed slates of candidates. These groups, which were short lived, usually focused their campaigns on the negative influences of C.G.C. control. Campaign styles changed a bit following C.G.C.'s 1975 defeat. Campaigns were run independently and each candidate was forced to seek funding individually. This increased both the total amount spent and the contributions by special interests. There was no sense of cohesiveness among the candidates, each running against all others. Mass mailings, city- wide and smaller circulation newspaper ads, radio and T.V. spots, and posters and billboards were used more extensively than before. Grass roots campaigning was not used under the at-large system. Campaign expenses were estimated at from $10,000 to $25,000 per candidate.

An important phenomenon evident in post-1975 elections is that only one incumbent council candidate has lost a bid for re-election. In 1977

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[9]"Independents, Charter Candidates for City Offices Spar at Rally," Arizona Republic, October 28,1971, p.34.

[10]ibid.

all three incumbents who ran were re-elected, and in 1979 voters retained every council person elected in 1977. All incumbents chose to run again in 1981; five were re-elected and the one "new" council person elected had served on the city council several years earlier. As some interviewees observed, this points to the power of incumbency, the the power of name recognition, and the ability of incumbents to raise campaign funds.

When asked to describe Phoenix city elections, the majority of those interviewed acknowledged that when the Charter group was in control there were no real campaigns. The committee chose candidates, the newspaper endorsed them, and they were elected. Many interviewees suggested that even after C.G.C.'s defeat its power continued in a more informal way since the same individuals influenced the elections by donating money and giving support to candidates. Interviewees recognized that citywide elections are expensive and that in order to receive sufficient funding, candidates must have a background and views similar to those of a small group of powerful people in the city.

CONCLUSIONS

Respondents to the survey stated that the at-large electoral system made it possible for a small group to effectively control the city. Some respondents felt this was a positive aspect of the city and others claimed that it had only negative effects. Respondents who favored the at-large system felt that Phoenix was well managed and that city government was accessible to all the citizens of Phoenix. Others, who had negative feelings toward city government, felt that city services had not been equitably distributed nor was the city responsive to their problems. All respondents agreed however, that this small group of people, the C.G.C.,

controlled the city for so long that its influence on all aspects of government will be felt for many years.

APPENDIX

INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

The following set of questions were those asked of all respondents in this study. The interview format was divided into four separate sections. The first section contains a variety of "general questions" to which every participant responded. The subsequent three sections contain questions asked of those who held specific positions within the community. The catagories include current or former councilmembers, city managers and department heads, and community and business leaders. Questions asked of citizens in the two control cities were altered somewhat to reflect their unique situation. Where time permitted, persons interviewed were asked to comment on issues not covered in the structured interview but of importance to their community.

GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. Do you think that any particular groups have gained or lost influence in city government as a result of the election change? (Prompt for blacks, Mexican-Americans, business, neighborhoods, coalitions)

2. Have the major issues addressed by city government changed as a result of the electoral system change? For example, are long-term, citywide problems addressed more or less effectively now than before?

3. Has the new system changed the distribution of decision-making power in city government? (Prompt for power of city council, city manager, boards and commissions, mayor)

4. Do you think the change in the system has affected the way services and facilities are provided by the city? (Prompt for parks, libraries, streets, etc.) Are services and facilities now being distributed equitably? Were they before?

5. Do you think geographical and racial interests are more fairly represented in city government now as opposed to before? (For example, on the city council, on boards and commissions?)

6. How have campaign styles changed under the new system? (Prompt for number of candidates, roles of slating groups, importance of coalitions, role of media coverage, presence of grassroots campaigning)

7. Do you think there has been a difference in citizen participation since the system change? (In voting, working in campaigns, activity in neighborhood organizations, other)

8. Overall, what have been the results of the change?

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR CURRENT/FORMER MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

1. Do you think the change in the election system has caused city councilmembers to view their role differently than before the change? How?

2. Do you think people on the city staff, including the manager, have a different attitude toward the council under the new system?

3. What issues do you think your constituents are most interested in: issues affecting the city as a whole, issues affecting their own neighborhoods, or help with individual problems?

4. Under the new system, do councilmembers have more or less contact with constituents than before the change? (Prompt: Can you estimate how many calls you get from constituents in a typical week?)

5. Have new or different alignments been formed within the city council since the election system has changed?

6. What issue or activity demands most of your time?

7. Ask of councilmembers in cities with combination systems: Is the role of the at-large councilmembers different different from that of a district councilmember? (Prompt for authority, decision-making power, responsiveness, types of issues addressed.)

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR CITY MANAGERS/DEPARTMENT HEADS

1. Have your dealings with the city council changed under the new system? How?

2. Has the change in systems made any difference to your department(s)? How?

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR COMMUNITY/BUSINESS LEADERS

1. How long have you (your group) been active in city affairs?

2. Has the change affected your group's influence in city government or your ability to get things done? (Prompt for contact with city council, ability to raise issues with council or boards?)

3. Do you think the change has affected the council's effectiveness?

4. Do you think city government, including the council, boards, and administration, is more or less accessible to your group and responsive to its interests under the new system?